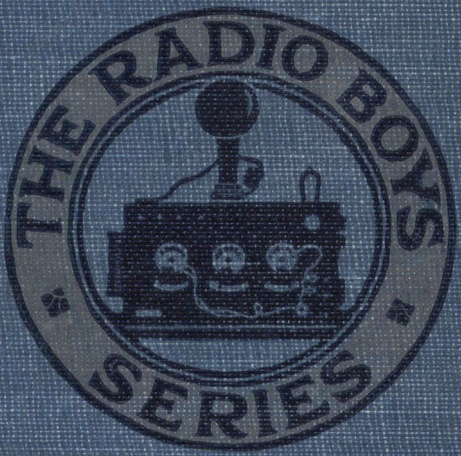
THE RADIO BOYS AIDING THE SNOW BOUND



ALLEN CHAPMAN

To Billy

To Billy
From Aunt Dessie.

THE RADIO BOYS AIDING THE SNOWBOUND

THE LUMBER-JACK ENJOYED THE RADIO.

The Radio Boys Aiding the Snowbound. (*Page* 91)

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES
(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS AIDING THE SNOWBOUND

OR

'STARVATION DAYS AT LUMBER RUN

BY

ALLEN CHAPMAN

AUTHOR OF
THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
THE RADIO BOYS IN GOLD VALLEY
RALPH OF THE ROUNDHOUSE, ETC.

WITH FOREWORD BY
JACK BINNS

ILLUSTRATED BY
WALTER S. ROGERS

NEW YORK
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By Allen Chapman

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THE RADIO BOYS SERIES

(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
THE RADIO BOYS AT OCEAN POINT
THE RADIO BOYS AT THE SENDING STATION
THE RADIO BOYS AT MOUNTAIN PASS
THE RADIO BOYS TRAILING A VOICE
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FOREST RANGERS
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS
THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND
THE RADIO BOYS IN GOLD VALLEY
THE RADIO BOYS AIDING THE SNOWBOUND

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RALPH ON THE MIDNIGHT FLYER
RALPH AND THE MISSING MAIL POUCH
RALPH ON THE MOUNTAIN DIVISION
RALPH AND THE TRAIN WRECKERS

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The Radio Boys Aiding the Snowbound

FOREWORD

By Jack Binns

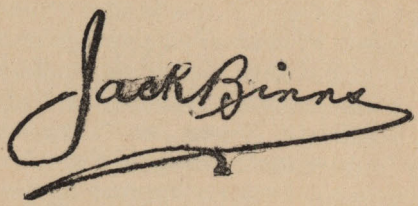
The resourcefulness of the Radio Boys in their latest adventure resulted in bringing life-saving supplies to the men in the lumber camp who were on the point of starvation through treachery. It is quite a coincidence that this splendid tale should come out at a time when similar Radio Boys—more familiarly known as "Amateurs"—were largely instrumental, through their heroic work, in saving many lives endangered by the disastrous floods that swept over the New England States.

There seems to be something more than mere fascination about Radio for the average healthy boy—something that brings out all the fine qualities with which Nature has endowed him. As a hobby it stimulates his resourcefulness, imagination and inventive faculties.

The entire Radio Boys Series has brought these points out admirably in a way that is most appealing to all boys, whether they be above or below the half century mark in age.

Every boy will live each moment intently in the adventures of the Radio Boys and experience a thrill with them while they are passing through one of those nerve-testing escapades in which they use their pet hobby to such splendid advantage.

This tale of the "Radio Boys Aiding the Snowbound" also emphasizes the value of Radio Broadcasting as a means of keeping isolated posts in touch with the world and at the same time bringing them entertainment which hitherto has been restricted to the inhabitants of metropolitan areas.



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THE RADIO BOYS AIDING THE SNOWBOUND

CHAPTER I

FLYING THICK AND FAST

"THIS is the life!" cried Bob Layton exultingly, as he urged on still faster the horse drawing the sleigh in which he and a group of his comrades were seated.

"You said something!" agreed Joe Atwood, who was seated on the driver's seat with Bob.

"Gee, I'm glad your dad had the idea of sending you on that errand to Moundsville," put in Herb Fennington, from the back seat. "Twenty miles of sleigh-riding on a glorious day like this, and it doesn't cost us a cent!"

"It'll sure give us an appetite for dinner," remarked Jimmy Plummer, sitting beside Herb.

"As if you needed anything to give you an appetite!" jeered Bob. "That's something you have nothing else but."

"I was hungry myself a little while ago," re-

marked Herb languidly, "but it seems to have passed."

Jimmy gave a start and looked at Herb suspiciously. Then his hand reached for his pocket.

"They're gone!" he wailed, as his hand encountered nothing but emptiness.

"What's gone?" asked Joe, looking blank.

"My doughnuts," shrilled Jimmy. "I had three of them stowed away in that pocket."

"Perhaps you've eaten them," suggested Joe. "You're terribly absent-minded sometimes, Jimmy."

"They may have been jolted out of your pocket on the way," observed Bob, trying to keep his face straight. "We've hit some pretty hard bumps, one especially just as we were coming out of Moundsville."

"Jolted nothing!" replied Jimmy. "It's this crook, Herb Fennington, that swiped them."

"Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy!" returned Herb in a horrified tone, "you surely don't mean that. Take back them cruel words. The shock must have affected your mind."

"Poor boy, his mind was never very strong at the best," remarked Bob commiseratingly.

"You fellows may kid all you like," growled Jimmy; "but I call that a pretty raw deal."

"Not raw," murmured Herb. "They were pretty well cooked."

"How do you know?" demanded Jimmy. "That proves that you took them, you robber!"

"I was just speaking on general principles," was Herb's defense. "I know what a good cook your mother is."

"See the way he's trying to get out of it," Jimmy appealed to Joe and Bob. "He doesn't dare deny that he took 'em."

"By advice of counsel, I refuse to remember," Herb replied.

"I'll have padlocks put on my pockets after this," grumbled Jimmy.

Just then they came to a sharp curve in the road. Bob Layton had been so engaged in the exchange of chaff with Jimmy that he had not slowed up as much as he usually did when taking a bend. He took the curve at too high a speed, the sleigh tipped over, and in a moment all four of the boys were flying through the air.

There was a wild medley of whirling arms and legs, and then the boys partly disappeared in the high snowbanks that lined each side of the road.

Fortunately the snow was soft and fleecy, and in a moment they had floundered out and were shaking and brushing the snow from their garments.

"I've got about a ton of it down my back," grumbled Herb Fennington.

"No more than I have," replied Joe, as he

twisted and squirmed with the discomfort of it.

"All my fault," observed Bob. "I was a simpleton for not slowing up. Lucky none of us hit a telegraph pole."

"Lucky, too, the horse didn't run away," put in Jimmy, as he noted the animal standing tranquilly a few paces away. "I'd hate to have to hoof it the rest of the way into town."

The four boys righted the sleigh without much difficulty and were glad to find that neither shafts nor harness had been broken.

"Better than I deserve," muttered Bob to himself. "I'd hate to have to confess to dad that I'd been so careless."

"This is sure my unlucky day," remarked Jimmy. "I'd have done better to stay at home and tinker with my radio."

"What do you want to tinker with it for?" asked Herb. "You were telling me a couple of days ago that it was in perfect shape."

"Nothing is perfect," answered Jimmy. "I want to try out a new hook-up. There's always room for improvement."

"Right you are," agreed Bob Layton heartily. "A fellow gets dizzy trying to keep up to date. Every day something new is coming up. Did you read of that new sending set that can be carried by a fellow under his coat so that nobody'll know he's carrying it?"

"Batteries and all?" asked Herb incredulously.

"Sure thing," replied Bob.

"More like a toy than anything else, I should think," put in Joe Atwood. "A thing so small as that can't have much of a range."

"No, not more than two miles," admitted Bob. "But I've learned that when they get two miles in radio it isn't long before they'll be getting two hundred."

"What's it used for?" asked Herb.

"They believe that its greatest value will be in military affairs," returned Bob. "In a battle, for instance, a man up in the front ranks who can see what the enemy's doing or planning can send a message back to the rear, asking for reinforcements, supplies, ammunition, or anything else that's necessary."

"They already have field telephones for that sort of thing," suggested Jimmy.

"Yes, in trench work," Bob replied. "But it takes time to lay the wire and to dig shelters, and it can't be done well under fire. Then, too, the wires may be cut and put out of commission. But nobody can cut the air. The man with the radio sees something happening, and in a few seconds his comrades for a couple of miles back know all about it."

"What won't they be doing next?" murmured Herb.

"There's absolutely no limit," declared Bob enthusiastically. "That's what makes radio so fascinating. There's always something more to learn. I shouldn't— What's that?"

The "that" was a snowball that had caught the horse in the flank and made it jump so wildly that Bob had hard work to control it.

They had entered the outskirts of Clintonia and were at the moment driving along a street that bordered the Shagary River.

The next instant there came a perfect volley of snowballs. One of them caught Jimmy in the stomach, causing him to emit a startled "woof!" Another grazed Bob's cheek and a third carried Herb's hat away. Still others hit the horse, which reared and danced in fright.

Bob's first task was to soothe the frightened animal. This accomplished, he jumped to the road and tied the horse to a tree.

All this time the fusillade continued and the boys were hit several times. They were no ordinary snowballs, either, as they had been soaked in water until they were icy, and one of them in bursting disclosed a stone.

None of the four boys had caught a glimpse of their assailants, but all noted the fact that the missiles came from one direction—the side on which the river lay. A hedge grew on that side and it was from behind this that the volley came.

On looking closer in the gathering dusk, they thought they could see vaguely a number of forms moving about.

"Come ahead, fellows, let's root them out!" cried Bob Layton, his eyes blazing as he led the charge.

"I'll bet it's Buck Looker and his gang," declared Joe. "Nobody else would put stones in snowballs!"

The Radio Boys had to make a circuit to get around the hedge, which was too high to be leaped over, and by the time they had got to the further side they could detect a number of figures in full retreat. They recognized them at a glance.

"Just what I thought," grunted Joe. "Buck Looker, Carl Lutz, Terence Mooney and Bud Hayes. Brave behind the hedge, but cowards when you get them in the open."

"Yellow, clean through," panted Bob. "Ten to one they hoped to make the horse run away. They'd do anything to down us."

At intervals the retreating party halted for a moment to send a storm of missiles back at their pursuers. Only for a moment though, and then their flight was resumed.

This led them directly toward the river. If it had been summer-time they could have gone no further. But now the stream was frozen over,

solidly near the banks, more thinly toward the center.

Out on the ice sped Looker and his gang, with the Radio Boys gaining on them with every passing moment.

A number of the Clintonia boys and girls were skating on the frozen surface of the river, and excited exclamations rose from them as they saw the fugitives and their pursuers. They sensed that a fight was imminent and skated along eagerly to see what was about to happen.

So engrossed were they in the flight and pursuit that prudence was forgotten, and they drew perilously near to the thinner ice in the middle of the stream.

Then suddenly there was a crackling sound, followed by shouts from the boys and screams from the girls. A hoarse yell arose:

"Back! Back! The ice is breaking!"

Those terror-stricken shouts were lost in more agonizing screams as the treacherous ice gave way. There was a splash, and several of the skating boys and girls were engulfed!

CHAPTER II

A DARING RESCUE

A THRILL of horror shot through the hearts of the Radio Boys. All thoughts of their enemies vanished. Tragedy was here—stark, terrible tragedy!

For a moment the blood in their veins seemed turned to ice. Bob Layton was the first to arouse himself from the paralysis that seemed to enchain their faculties.

"Quick, fellows!" he shouted, tearing off his coat as he rushed toward the break in the ice. "Joe, you follow me. Herb and Jimmy, rush back to the shore and get some long boards and bring them here. Get all the folks you can to help you. Quick, now, quick!"

Jimmy and Herb were off like a flash, and Joe sped close on the heels of Bob. In a moment they were on the edge of the break.

Four heads were bobbing in the water, two of them those of girls, and the faces had on them the terror of death. The hapless ones were trying

desperately to keep afloat and grasping frantically at the brittle ice that broke beneath their touch.

Bob caught sight of a red tam-o'-shanter, covering golden curls on the head of a little girl, and dived for it. Joe dived at the same moment.

The deadly chill of the water clutched at their hearts and seemed for a moment to make them stop breathing. They rose to the surface, shook the water from their eyes, and an instant later Bob caught hold of the little girl with the tam and Joe gathered in another.

The little ones were frantic and clung to their rescuers so desperately as to hamper their movements. But the boys kept their heads, tore the clinging hands from their necks and placed them on their shoulders. Then they reached out and clutched the others, one of them just as he was sinking for the third time.

Luckily, both Bob and Joe were expert swimmers, and they managed to keep themselves and their helpless burdens above water while they moved slowly toward the more solid portion of the ice.

While Bob Layton and Joe Atwood are engaged in this struggle for their own lives and those of others, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the previous volumes of this series, to tell who the Radio Boys were and

what had been their adventures up to the time this story opens.

Bob Layton, at this time about sixteen years old, was the son of a leading chemist and druggist of Clintonia, a town of ten thousand inhabitants on the Shagary River. Bob was tall and muscular, a fine specimen of American boyhood. His mental and moral qualities were on a par with his physical gifts. He was frank, courageous, outspoken, a general favorite with the best people of the town and especially with the boys of his own age.

His special chum and inseparable companion was Joe Atwood, of about the same age, the son of a prominent doctor of Clintonia. Joe was of fair complexion while Bob was dark, but with this exception they were physically much alike. They differed somewhat in disposition, as Joe was quick to anger and apt to go off like a flash of powder when he detected anything that was mean or sneaking. Bob was cooler and held his temper better in check.

Closely associated with Bob and Joe were two other boys a trifle younger, Herb Fennington and Jimmy Plummer. Herb was the son of the owner of the largest department store in the town. He expended a good deal of energy in thinking up puns and conundrums and practical jokes to spring upon his companions.

Jimmy Plummer, the youngest of the quartet, was the son of Samuel Plummer, carpenter and contractor. Jimmy was red-cheeked, fat, and in structure somewhat resembled a barrel. Perhaps this was due to some extent to his fondness for food in general and for doughnuts in particular, of which he usually carried a reserve in his pockets. So fond of this culinary delight was he that half the time he was addressed as "Doughnuts," instead of by his baptismal name.

The close friendship that united the four chums was cemented still more strongly by their mutual interest in radio. Ever since that wonderful science had got its tremendous grip upon the world, they had been among its most ardent followers. So attached were they to everything pertaining to it that they were commonly referred to by the townspeople as The Radio Boys. It was a title of honor and they bore it proudly.

In their testing and experiments they were helped beyond measure by the counsel of Doctor Amory Dale, the pastor of the Old First Church of Clintonia. He was an eloquent preacher and stood high in the esteem of the people of the town. He was especially popular with the younger element, for he was still young himself and had never forgotten what it was to be a boy. He was intensely interested in radio and thoroughly familiar with all its phases, and he was

always ready to help the boys when they ran up against something that puzzled them.

Despite their general popularity, the Radio Boys were not without their enemies. The chief of these was a certain Buck Looker, a bullying, browbeating fellow of a coarse and mean disposition. Closely associated with Buck was Carl Lutz, a boy of about his own age and of similar characteristics, and Terence Mooney, quite a little younger than Carl and Buck and serving them as a tale-bearer and sneak.

There had been frequent clashes between the Radio Boys and this rascally trio in which Buck and his gang had come out second best. There was no trick so low and mean that the Looker gang would not resort to it, and the fact that they so often proved fruitless only deepened their hostility.

The member of Congress from the district that included Clintonia offered on one occasion valuable prizes for the best home-made radio sets constructed by the boys of the district. This fired the ambition of Bob Layton and his friends, and they entered the contest. What difficulties they encountered, how in the course of their experiments they were able by means of the radio to track down a heartless scoundrel who had defrauded an orphan girl of her property, what the prizes were and who the winners were—all this

is told in the first volume of this series, entitled, "The Radio Boys' First Wireless."

Events followed which are narrated in other volumes. Radio led the boys into many strange and thrilling adventures. While on a vacation stay in a seaside resort, they were able by wireless to aid a crippled ship on which some of their own people were voyaging. They grew so expert in the science that they were placed on the program of a broadcasting station with unlooked-for results. By a curious combination of circumstances, they made a trip with the Forest Rangers and were nearly trapped in a woodland fire. Still further afield they went when, as the result of a shipwreck, they found themselves on a vessel of the Iceberg Patrol and had fights with giant bergs and fierce polar bears. Later on they found themselves involved in a frightful flood caused by the bursting of a dam, in which their courage and knowledge of radio stood them in good stead. Many exciting adventures with smugglers attended a visit that they made to a deserted island. But even these paled before some of the perils they encountered on a Western trip.

How on this last expedition they outwitted rascals who were trying to steal a mine, how they were pursued by Indians on the warpath and were rescued just in the nick of time by a squadron of United States cavalry is told in the preceding vol-

ume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys in Gold Valley."

Now to return to Bob and Joe as, with strength fast failing, they felt the ice crumbling beneath their clutching fingers, while their helpless burdens grew ever heavier and heavier.

The shouts and shrieks of those who stood on the solid ice, not daring to venture near the struggling swimmers for fear they and others with them might be engulfed, had been heard on the shore, and through their dimmed eyes Bob and Joe caught glimpses of the figures of men rushing toward them. Would they come in time?

Then came a shout of familiar voices, and Herb and Jimmy came pantingly through the throng, each having hold of a long board the other end of which was held by volunteers.

"Clear the way!" they yelled, as they dropped the boards and slid one end of each out on the ice until both reached the open water.

Bob grabbed the end of one and Joe the other, while men flung themselves down on the other end of each to hold the boards from tipping.

Then Herb moved on his stomach along one board and Jimmy along the other until they reached their comrades.

"Steady does it, old boy," called Herb to Bob, as he relieved him of one of the children. "We'll have you all out of there in a jiffy."

He passed the child to willing hands that were stretched out to receive it. Then he took the other so that Bob had both hands free. In the meantime Jimmy had done the same for Joe. Then the two helped their half-frozen and exhausted comrades to climb upon the plank and thence to safety.

Bob and Joe were so utterly blown that all they could do for the moment was to sink down on the ice and try to get back their breath.

Men gathered about them, slapping them on the shoulders and trying to grasp their hands as they told them what they thought of them. Others hastened with the little ones to shore, where they were hurriedly transported to their homes.

The crowd parted and a tall, professional looking man came hastily through. It was Doctor Atwood, Joe's father.

"What's all this? What have you chaps been doing?" he asked in a semi-jocular tone that did not, however, mask his anxiety.

"Only saving four lives at the risk of their own," answered Herb Fennington. "Apart from that they haven't done a thing."

Doctor Atwood took a phial from his case and made Bob and Joe partake of its contents.

"That will warm you up a bit," he said, as he replaced the phial. "Now come along and pile

into my car and I'll get you home in a hurry. My house is nearest, and you'll both go there."

There was room in the car for all four of the Radio Boys, and in a few minutes they were all at the Atwood home. There Bob and Joe were stripped, put into a hot bath, vigorously rubbed down, swathed in blankets, given hot drinks and put to bed.

"I hope the kiddies will pull through all right," murmured Bob, as he relaxed on his pillow.

"We'll hope so," returned the doctor. "But just now all you've got to do is to go to sleep. You've done enough work for one day, if you ask me."

Herb and Jimmy had hovered about, doing what they could, and now they turned to go.

"So long, fellows," said Jimmy. "Good luck!"

"Any message to Buck Looker and his gang?" grinned Herb.

"Tell 'em their licking is only postponed," laughed Joe.

"And that later on we'll pay our debt with interest," added Bob.

CHAPTER III

THE MARVELS OF RADIO

THE next day the town was ringing with the exploit of Bob Layton and Joe Atwood. The papers were full of it, and the Atwood bell was kept busy by reporters, anxious to get the story from every angle.

This was extremely embarrassing to the boys, who were as modest as they were brave.

"This hero stuff makes me tired," grunted Bob disgustedly, after the fifth interview to which he and Joe had to submit. "Why can't they let us alone?"

"Ain't it the truth!" echoed Joe plaintively. "We did only what any fellow that had happened to be on the spot would have done, and here they're after our pictures and everything. The next reporter that comes I'll pitch out on his ear."

They had awakened on that morning feeling almost as well as usual, except for a sense of weariness. Their splendid physical condition had

stood them in good stead. If they had had their way, they would have gone out as usual, but Doctor Atwood would have none of it.

"No, you don't," he said. "You're doing surprisingly well, but pneumonia has a habit of developing some time after exposure. You'll stay right here until I give the word."

So, though it irked them, they had to obey, and it was only after a couple of days more of watchfulness and treatment that they were given their liberty.

Of course they were thanked by the parents of the little ones who had been saved. There had even been a hint of a reward, but this the boys had frowned down.

There were two compensations that rewarded them for their enforced imprisonment. One was that, as far as could be foretold at the time, all the little ones they had rescued would recover. The other was that they could relieve the tedium of their confinement by devoting themselves to radio.

They were trying out a new condenser wrinkle on Joe's set late in the afternoon with Herb and Jimmy, who had dropped in to see their chums, giving their more or less valuable advice, when the bell rang. A moment later Doctor Dale was ushered into the room.

"Just got back from a convention in New

York," he announced, with a genial smile. "As I've heard little else since my return except talk of the rescue you boys took part in, I thought I'd drop in and see how the heroes were getting along."

Bob and Joe grinned with some embarrassment.

"They're making a big fuss about a very small matter," remarked Bob.

"No small matter at all," declared the doctor warmly. "It was a fine, plucky thing to do, and I'm proud that you belong to our town."

"Catch on to anything new in radio while you were away?" asked Joe, anxious to change the subject.

"Several things," replied Doctor Dale. "One was when I called on an old friend of mine who had been taken to a hospital. I thought he might be lonely and need cheering up. But I could have spared myself any worry on that score. There he was, as chipper as you please, sitting up in bed and taking in a musical program over the radio. I felt almost guilty about interrupting."

"I suppose he'd had his set brought from home," observed Jimmy.

"Not at all," replied the doctor. "You see this was a new, up-to-date hospital and had all the latest improvements. Every one of the rooms was equipped with radio. You couldn't see any

set, but all you had to do was to slip a plug in a hole in the wall, and there you had the program for as long as you wanted it. When you'd had enough, you could pull out the plug. No tuning in, no dials, no anything except the plug."

"That's what you call service!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Right you are," returned the doctor. "The head of the hospital told me that it was remarkable what an effect it had upon the patients. It kept them cheerful and took their mind off their sickness or their coming operation. All the doctors and nurses were enthusiastic over it."

"Why," went on Doctor Dale with a laugh, "even the more progressive dentists are using it."

"Dentists!" exclaimed Joe. "It would take some music to keep me comfortable when I saw one of those fellows bringing his forceps to yank out a tooth."

"It would seem so," laughed the doctor. "But all the same it works like an anaesthetic. It removes in part the element of nervous shock with which the dentists have had to contend."

"I've never thought of tooth-pulling as a treat," murmured Herb.

"It'll never be quite that," Doctor Dale admitted. "But it will be shorn of some of its terrors."

"Another thing that interested me," he con-

tinued, "happened while I was walking along a New York street. I heard a splendid baritone voice that seemed to be coming from the skies. I looked up at the tall buildings on either side, thinking it must have come from an upper window. Then away up in the sky I saw an airplane and realized that the music was coming from that. It must have been nearly or quite a mile high. Yet I could distinguish the words as well as the music."

"How could it reach you from that distance?" asked Jimmy wonderingly.

"I learned afterwards," replied the doctor, "that the singer had an amplifying apparatus that weighed fifteen hundred pounds and that over one horsepower was required to work the speaker unit. But the music, coming through the clear, sunlit air, was wonderful. If the plane had been hidden by a passing cloud, it would have seemed almost supernatural—as though a message were coming direct from heaven."

"It must have been great," put in Bob. "I should think a thing like that could be used for a lot of things besides music."

"So it could," assented the doctor. "It might be used to give people warning of a coming flood or tornado, so that they would be able to flee or take measures for their protection. Or, hovering above an army, it might be able to tell the com-

rades on the ground what the enemy was doing. There's a score of ways in which it might be utilized.

"But it's not only sound that can be sent by radio," he continued. "Power can be sent in the same way. I saw a very interesting demonstration of that while I was in the city. I saw electric lamps that glowed brightly though not connected with power wires. There was a novel radio furnace where chemical reactions possible only in a vacuum were initiated by radio waves. A disk of metallic tungsten, which, as perhaps you know, is the most infusible of all metals, was made white-hot in an instant by invisible rays."

"Gee," said Jimmy enviously, "you were in luck to see all that. I wish I'd been there."

"The marvels of radio are almost beyond belief," replied the doctor. "It's no wonder that the ignorant and superstitious should ascribe it to magic. I was reading the other day of a place in Poland where the villagers beat the schoolmaster and smashed his radio set because they believed it to be the invention of Satan."

Doctor Dale chatted with the boys a few minutes longer and then took his leave.

"He's a regular fellow, isn't he?" remarked Herb appreciatively.

"They don't come any better," declared Bob. "Nothing stiff and stand-offish about him."

"He's all to the good," was Joe's comment.

"How long are you fellows going to keep fooling with that condenser?" asked Jimmy. "I'm getting hungry to hear something. If I'd been tinkering with that thing I'd have had it fixed long ago."

"He hates himself, doesn't he?" remarked Joe to Bob. "But now it's finished and it's a good job, if I say it that shouldn't. What do you want to hear?"

"There's a talk about lumber camps on the program of WEAF this afternoon," suggested Jimmy. "Tune in and let's see what we get."

Bob turned the dials, and they were just in time to hear the announcer state that the lumber camp talk would be the next feature of the program.

It proved to be an interesting talk, interspersed with singing. The lecturer knew his subject and had a vein of dry humor that kept the Radio Boys laughing most of the time. He drew a fascinating picture of the wild, free life of the camp and the woods. He had brought a couple of lumberjacks with him, and these at intervals gave some of the songs with which the hardy lumbermen whiled away the early night hours before they went to their bunks. It was a phase of life that was largely new to the boys, and they listened with the keenest interest.

"Gee, fellows, wouldn't it be great if we had a chance to see something of that kind of living in the great out-of-doors?" exclaimed Bob, when the speaker had concluded.

"You said it," asserted Joe.

"No such luck for us," murmured Herb disconsolately.

"Speak for yourself," put in Jimmy. "Maybe little Jimmy will get a hack at it before long."

"You're talking through your hat," said Herb.

"What do you mean, Jimmy?" asked Bob.

"Just what I say," returned Jimmy, with an air of importance. "I heard my dad say the other day that he was going soon on business to the logging camp at Lumber Run. I didn't think much of it at the time, but now that I've heard this talk I'm going to put in a plea to go along."

"Lumber Run!" exclaimed Joe. "Why, that's the big camp up near the headwaters of the Shagary River."

"Go up to the head of the geography class," said Jimmy approvingly. "You hit it the first time, and that's something unusual with you, Joe."

He deftly ducked the pass that Joe made at him and put the table between them.

"When's your dad going?" asked Herb.

"Sometime during the next week or two," replied Jimmy. "I don't know the exact time. But

when he goes I'm going, too, or know the reason why."

"Some fellows are born lucky," remarked Herb enviously.

"To say nothing of handsome and brainy," remarked Jimmy complacently, as he threw back his chest and strutted around the room.

Unfortunately for him, his head was held so high in the air that he failed to notice Herb's slyly outstretched foot. Down he went with a bang.

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" mourned Joe, as he reached over to help the discomfited Jimmy to his feet.

"I'll bet all the plaster is off the ceilings downstairs," put in Bob.

"Sorry my foot was in your way, Jimmy," said Herb regretfully.

"Yes, you are!" sputtered Jimmy. "That's what I call a low-down trick."

"We're just putting you in training for the lumber camp," said Bob. "You'll find things rougher up there than you do here."

"I'll bet they're not such a bunch of roughnecks as I see right in this room," retorted Jimmy. "I'm going to duck right now."

Just then the door opened and the face of Mrs. Atwood appeared.

"Nora's just finished baking some lemon pies,

Joe," she said. "They're cooling on the kitchen windowsill. If you and the boys would like one of them——"

It was enough. There was a wild shout and a concerted rush down the stairs, and in a moment the biggest of the pies had been lifted from the windowsill and was in process of being devoured.

"I thought you said you were going to duck, Jimmy," remarked Joe.

"I did," replied Jimmy, as well as he could with his mouth full. "But hasn't a fellow the right to change his mind? There'll be no ducking by me as long as there's a crumb of this pie left."

CHAPTER IV

A LIVELY TUSSLE

"SAY, Jimmy, you sure are lucky," remarked Herb Fennington a few days later, when the boys were gathered together at the Plummer home.

Jimmy looked up in surprise. The power tube that he was adjusting was proving fractious. He failed to see at the moment how he was any luckier than his companions.

"How come?" he asked. "Guess I must be wearing all the luck back of me and can't see it. Jiminy crickets! what's the matter with this tube?"

"The tube's all right. It's you that's wrong," grinned Bob Layton. "Here, give it to me, Doughnuts, and get the worry off your mind. That is, if you can call it a mind," he added as an afterthought.

Jimmy relinquished the exasperating tube reluctantly. Then he turned to Herb.

"What made you pull that boner about my running in luck?" he queried.

"'Tain't no boner, nohow!" declared Herb. "Didn't you say there was a chance that you would make that trip to Lumber Run with your dad?"

Jimmy grinned. He ignored Herb's grammarless and meaningless declaration and answered the question.

"Bet you my life there's a chance! More than a chance, if you ask me. If dad gets off without me, it's because I've suddenly gone deaf and blind and dumb."

"Well, I don't know about the deaf and blind," remarked Joe insultingly, "but I think I can answer for the dumb. Yes, I'm sure I can."

"Aw, you're only jealous," jeered Jimmy, producing a doughnut from his pocket and sinking his teeth in it. "What you want is to go to Lumber Run, too."

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed Bob, as he looked up from his task with an expression on his face of intense longing. "Say, wouldn't it be great if the whole bunch could go along?"

"Are you asking a question or making a statement?" observed Herb resentfully. "We all know how great it would be, but Doughnuts is the only one that has any luck. If he fell into the river, he'd come up with a fish in his mouth."

"I'd like to have all you fellows go up there," said Jimmy. "It would be lots more fun for me.

But just now I don't like to ask dad. Fact is—" Jimmy's usual jovial face sobered and he almost frowned—"dad seems worried about something."

The Radio Boys looked at him curiously.

"What do you mean—worried?" asked Herb.

"Well, I can't get the real facts of it," answered Jimmy hesitatingly. "But dad seems to be grizzling about a couple of thousand dollars a fellow owes him and that he's afraid he won't get."

"If anybody owed me two thousand dollars, shouldn't wonder if I'd be worried, too," remarked Bob.

"Sure, that's a lot of money," observed Herb in a tone of respect.

"How was it your dad let himself be separated from so much cash, Doughnuts?" asked Joe.

"I'm not very clear on that point," Jimmy admitted. "Dad didn't what you might call go into particulars. But I did catch on that there's a man named Felton—no, Pelton, Jason Pelton, who had borrowed two thousand dollars from him and then skipped out."

"Good time to skip," grinned Herb.

"Well, you may think it's a joke," returned Jimmy, his round face still sober, "but let me tell you, dad doesn't think so. You see, it's *his* two thousand dollars."

"That is apt to make a difference," murmured Bob.

"But I still don't see what this two thousand has to do with Lumber Run," objected Joe.

"Well, I'll tell you," said Jimmy, gulping down the last fragment of his doughnut. "This Pelton that's got dad's cash has been seen in the neighborhood of Lumber Run."

"The plot thickens," cried Joe. "A little detective work, eh? Now we know at last why your dad is considering going to the camp!"

"Not considering—just going," corrected Jimmy, with a wicked grin. "Plans all made. We start next week."

Herb groaned.

"Didn't I say you had all the luck?" he demanded.

"I admit it," said Jimmy. "But I'd give my shirt if you fellows were going along, too."

The wish was echoed heartily by Jimmy's hearers, but there seemed no chance that their hopes would be realized. So a few days later they went to the station to see Jimmy off, showering him with advice and regretting their inability to share in his good fortune.

But they always had the radio to fall back on, and they plunged into it with redoubled ardor during the days that Jimmy Plummer was gone.

Shortly after his departure a heavy fall of snow occurred in the night. New fleecy snow covered the old drifts that lined the sidewalks,

and the crystal covering crunched pleasantly under the feet of the Radio Boys as they swung off toward the business section of the town.

The sight of the new-fallen snow brought back the memory of the day they had driven in from Moundsville.

"Remember that chase we gave Buck Looker and his gang?" asked Joe Atwood, with a chuckle. "They ran like rabbits. It was brisk action while it lasted."

"Nearly ran all of us into a tragedy, though," observed Bob, with a tinge of seriousness in his tone.

"Yes, that last act wasn't in the scenario," admitted Herb. "That was pretty lively, too, if you ask me."

"Since then I've heard that Buck and his crowd have been spreading a report that we chased them down to the river purposely," said Joe.

"To murder them in the open water, I suppose," put in Herb sarcastically.

"Sure! There's nothing they wouldn't say of us if they got the chance," declared Bob. "Luckily, they've got such a reputation that no one believes a word they say."

"The decent people ought to get up a posse and run those fellows out of town!" exclaimed Herb.

"Is that so?"

The Radio Boys turned quickly toward the

sound of the taunting voice. As they did so, a hard snowball, thrown from ambush, caught Joe straight between the eyes.

The shock was so great that for a moment the lad staggered and almost fell.

"Where did that come from?" he demanded, as soon as he could get his breath.

Bob gripped his arm and pointed toward a building near by.

"There are some fellows over there," he said in a voice that shook with anger. "Probably Buck and his gang. Come along, fellows. We'll make a clean-up."

But as the three Radio Boys turned angrily toward the ambuscade a shower of missiles caught them, temporarily halting their advance.

Bob turned toward Joe and Herb as they prepared to resume the charge and shouted:

"Wait a minute, fellows. We'll fight them with their own weapons. To start with, anyway. Fists can come later."

Like a flash they started to work molding the snow into compact balls.

From behind the building came a jeering laugh. There was no longer any doubt as to their assailants. That was Buck Looker's voice.

"Think you can beat us, do you? Well, come along and try."

"There is no river here for you to push us

into," came another voice that the Radio Boys recognized as that of Bud Hayes, a follower of Buck's. "Maybe you won't have such an easy time."

"It sure was easy before," jeered Herb in return. "Gee, you broke ground so fast we had to do a Marathon to get anywhere near you. You're a thousand times better at running than you are at fighting."

The taunt was greeted by a shower of snowballs from the entrenched enemy. Before the boys could collect enough ammunition for a counter-attack, they were covered from head to foot with the bursting snow and were forced to stop and wipe it from their eyes before they could go on.

However, they worked steadily, anger mounting beneath the taunts and gibes of the bullies.

"Guess we've got enough for a starter now," said Bob, straightening up. "Come on, fellows. Let's go."

They rounded the building and then found that behind it Buck and his crowd had built a breastwork of snow. They noted, too, that there were five of their assailants. But they had expected this, for they knew that Buck would not have dared attack if the forces had been on anything like even terms.

"We'll run 'em ragged this time!" cried Herb,

as the Radio Boys stormed the breastwork, regardless of the hail of missiles.

"You only think you will," came the answer to Herb's threat as the speaker, Buck Looker, flung a snowball that hit Herb plump on the tip of his nose.

With a yell of anger Herb made a counter-attack and Buck Looker's grin was wiped from his face by the missile that caught him on the point of the chin with a force that made him rock.

CHAPTER V

IN HOT PURSUIT

For a few seconds the interchange of flying snowballs was fierce and fast. The odds of five against three were heavy, but the Radio Boys made up for their fewness in numbers by the accuracy and power of their fire, and when it came to gameness, Buck and his gang were outclassed.

Before the dash and determination of Bob Layton and his friends the enemy began to give ground.

With a joyful yell Bob urged on his forces.

"At 'em, fellows!" he shouted. "They're falling back! Get 'em while the getting's good!"

A perfect hail of missiles came from the Radio Boys that battered Looker and his cronies at close range and made them waver at first and then retreat.

The latter had been free with their ammunition at the beginning of the attack and now had no reserve. They tried to make a stand a little

way off, turning their backs to the stinging shower while they assembled a fresh supply.

But the Radio Boys never let up for a moment, and pelted their adversaries so mercilessly that the latter felt oozing out of them all the confidence that had been inspired by their numbers. Buck and his gang were not made of the stuff that endures, and it was a foregone conclusion that they would show the yellow streak when they met with strong opposition.

First one started to run and then another until, in a panic, they broke utterly and scuttled away as fast as their legs could carry them.

"We've got 'em on the run! We've got 'em on the run!" chanted Joe exultantly.

"Five against three, and yet they don't dare to stand!" chortled Bob. "Let them have it hot and heavy, fellows!"

"Look at them leg it," jeered Herb. "They sure could give points to a jack-rabbit."

Faster and faster the fugitives ran, and the Radio Boys pursued them until they were out of breath. Then Bob called a halt.

"We've taken their measure and I guess we can call it a day," he panted. "They've had all they wanted of our game. Almost twice as many as we are, and yet they haven't the sand to stand up against us."

In the days that followed the Radio Boys saw

little of their traditional enemies. Those fellows, chagrined over their defeat, took care to keep out of sight, and the boys, engrossed with the making of a new loud speaker which they hoped would be better than anything they had made up to date, soon dismissed their foes from their minds.

As they tinkered with their devices, their thoughts turned very frequently to their missing comrade.

"Pretty tough for us to have to stay in Clintonia with Jimmy running loose in the wilds," growled Herb.

"Wonder if Mr. Plummer found the track of that fellow and got back his two thousand," observed Bob.

"I hope so," replied Joe. "It's a good deal too much money to lose."

One consolation at least the boys had, and that was that they were enjoying a forced vacation from school. An epidemic of influenza was sweeping through the town, and though it was light in character, it had been thought best to close the schools for a couple of weeks until the disease had spent its force.

Then, one afternoon, when the chums were gathered at the Layton home, the door opened with a bang and Jimmy bounced in, his face wearing its customary broad grin.

"Hello, fellows," he greeted them. "How's the old WXU this afternoon?"

The others fell upon Jimmy, pounding and mauling him affectionately.

"When did you get in?" asked Herb, after Jimmy had extricated himself from the mêlée.

"Just a few minutes ago, straight from the wild and woolly wilderness," chortled Jimmy. "Say, but maybe I haven't had a rattling time! You fellows ought to have been there!"

"Tell us something we don't know," protested Bob, in an aggrieved tone.

"Needn't rub it in," grumbled Joe. "So you had a whale of a time, did you?"

"Swell," returned Jimmy. "I tell you it's a regular place, that camp is, sawmills, swiftly running lumber stream, company shacks, and everything."

"How about the men?" asked Bob, with interest. "Regular rough and tough, eat-'em-alive sort, I suppose?"

"You bet, and then some!" answered Jimmy, with a laugh. "Pretty good lot, though, take them altogether. Always ready to swap a yarn or a joke."

"Who runs the camp?" asked Herb, who had been listening with flattering attention.

"Name's Corning, Steve Corning. Everybody calls him Steve, though, and he mixes with the

men as though he were one of them. I liked him."

"You must be rather sorry to get back after such a corking good time," ventured Joe.

"Well, I am, sort of," said Jimmy, with a quizzical grin. He felt in one of his sagging pockets for a doughnut while the other boys exchanged smiling glances. He was, indeed, the same old Jimmy.

"I'd be sorrier, though," Jimmy continued, "if I weren't going back."

"Do you mean to say you're going back?" his comrades cried together.

Jimmy bit into the doughnut with maddening deliberation. He was evidently enjoying the sensation he had caused and was determined to prolong it as much as possible.

Herb made an impatient gesture toward him and Jimmy moved back with such precipitation that a piece of the doughnut became lodged in his throat and Joe had to pat him on the back to make him cough it up.

"Spare my life," pleaded Jimmy, "and I will tell you all. But first I'm going to ask you a question as man to man."

"Out with it," ordered Bob.

"Well," said Jimmy, "suppose you apologies for regular fellows had a chance to go to Lumber Run. Would you take it?"

"Would a snapping turtle snap?" asked Herb. "Listen, Doughnuts, are you stringing us?"

"Nary a string," replied Jimmy, with another bite of the doughnut. "If you want to go, all you have to do is to pack up the old kit bag—not forgetting the radio sets—and come along."

"No fooling?" cried Bob eagerly. "Is that a real proposition, Jimmy?"

"Bet you my life," returned the lad. "I was telling Reddy Payne about our radio, and the idea seemed to get him. Pretty soon he had a lot of the other boys interested, too. And one day, when I was talking to some of them about my latest transformer, Steve Corning came along and asked me if my buddies wouldn't like to come out for a week or two and bring their radio sets with them. I said," he added with a grin at the ring of intent faces, "I thought maybe they would."

"Hooray!" cried Bob, throwing a wrench up to the ceiling with small regard for consequences. "That's the best news I've heard in a year, Doughnuts, old boy! When do we start?"

"The sooner the quicker for me," Jimmy replied as the last crumb of the doughnut disappeared. "It's up to you fellows. What do you say? I'm ready any time."

Left to themselves, the Radio Boys would have wanted to start that very afternoon. But their parents had first to be consulted.

"I've never had much use for the flu," laughed Herb. "But if it had to come to Clintonia I'm sure glad it chose this time for doing it. If school were in, our folks would probably put their veto on this trip. But now I don't see any reason why they should kick about our going."

As a matter of fact, there was no strong objection. Mr. Layton happened to be acquainted with Mr. Corning, the owner of the lumber camp, and liked and respected him. Moreover, the boys had so often demonstrated that they could be trusted when on their own responsibility that the parents had little hesitation in consenting to the proposed trip.

But there was considerable to be done in the way of outfit and preparation, and it was not until nearly the end of the week that all things were in readiness for the start.

Their first idea had been to go by train, but Bob made a suggestion that was received with enthusiasm. They pounced upon it like a terrier upon a rat.

"We can go on trains any time," Bob said. "What's the matter with going up the river on the ice? It's frozen till it's as hard as stone. We can make most of the way on skates and drag our dunnage behind upon a sled. We can make it in a couple of days, and it'll give us a new experience. Jimmy can drag the sled. It'll be good

exercise for him and reduce some of his surplus flesh."

Jimmy glared at his chums.

"Guess again," he retorted. "You fellows don't make any pack-horse out of me. And where do you get that surplus flesh stuff? You don't have to carry it, do you?"

"That's all right, Jimmy," said Joe easily. "We know you're not fat. You're only adorably plump, a perfect thirty-six. I simply knew you loved to work and thought I was doing you a favor. But if you don't look at it that way, we'll take turns in drawing the sled."

"You bet your boots you will!" returned Jimmy, with conviction.

"As I was saying when I was interrupted," went on Bob, "we can start early one morning and get up to the camp with any sort of luck by night of the next day. We can take one sled for our luggage and another if necessary for our radio sets. And we can take a couple of guns along——"

"A couple won't be enough," interrupted Joe. "We'll want a gun apiece anyway. We may be able to get some hunting on the way, bring down some birds or an occasional rabbit."

"I have a good rifle," said Herb.

"And so have I," added Jimmy. "Got it for a present on my last birthday."

"Dad has a couple of double-barreled shotguns that will do for Joe and me," put in Bob. "With all these things we ought to be pretty well armed."

"We may need to be," remarked Joe soberly.

His companions looked at him inquiringly.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Bob.

"Oh, nothing much," replied Joe. "Only up that way there are occasional wolves and bears. Most of the bears, I suppose, will be in winter quarters, but once in a while they wander out. There are wildcats, too, and they're a mighty dangerous foe when it comes to a scrap. It's just as well, anyway, to be ready for trouble."

"Bring on your wolves and wildcats!" cried Herb exuberantly. "We may get some rattling good adventure out of this before we're through."

CHAPTER VI

OFF FOR LUMBER RUN

By Friday of that week the Radio Boys had completed their arrangements and were ready for the start to Lumber Run. They were escorted down to the banks of the frozen Shagary River by quite a number of their relatives and friends. Herb's sisters, Agnes and Amy, and his two younger brothers, Derry and Tom, were among those present.

The younger boys regarded their elder brother with frank envy and more than once were heard to comment that "Herb had all the luck."

Agnes and Amy on the other hand took the expedition lightly and teased their brother unmercifully, a sport in which Joe's sister Rose joined with gusto.

"Bob, you and Jimmy don't know how lucky you are," said the red-faced Herb aside to his friends, who had looked on in amusement, "not to have any girls in your families."

"A case of when a feller needs a friend," grinned Jimmy.

Herb nodded gloomily.

"You said it," he agreed.

On reaching the river bank the boys sat down and proceeded to buckle on their skates.

"How long do you suppose you're going to be able to use those things?" asked one of the onlookers. "They say that farther up the river the snow in some places is knee deep."

"But there's a trail through it most of the way," replied Jimmy. "One of the fellows in the lumber camp told me all about it. So many trappers and hunters come down the river in winter that there's a pretty well-beaten path. Reckon we can use our skates most of the way."

"All the same," persisted the objector, "I'll bet you run into some big drifts before you reach Lumber Run."

"Maybe so," agreed Bob indifferently.

With a shouted good-by to the people on the shore, they started off, skates ringing merrily on the glassy surface of the river, the sled, a long one that carried all they needed, drawn behind them on well-polished runners that offered as little friction as possible to the ice and permitted a reasonably good speed to be attained.

They had arranged to pull the sled in shifts, Bob and Joe leading off, with Herb and Jimmy

ready to take their turn when the others grew tired.

For the first hour they made rapid time. The ice on that part of the river had been blown clear of snow and offered a smooth surface both to skates and runners. Then, too, the boys were fresh and full of vigor and felt as though they could go on forever.

After a prolonged pull, Bob and Joe surrendered the pulling of the sled to their comrades. The latter buckled into their task gallantly enough, but neither was quite as old and strong as Bob and Joe, and they made slower progress. Moreover, the previous period of skating had taken something out of them.

Before long Jimmy was puffing. Despite the keen air, the sweat began to appear on his rubicund face. He tried to keep on, but the other boys noticed his predicament and insisted that he stop and rest a while.

"Perhaps it might be just as well," admitted Jimmy. "If we keep up this pace, I'll be nothing but skin stretched over a rack of bones by the time we get to Lumber Run."

The picture of the rotund Jimmy reduced practically to a skeleton was inconceivable, and it provoked laughter in which Jimmy himself good-naturedly joined.

"After all, we're not racing for a prize," re-

marked Bob. "We might as well take it easy and get all the fun we can out of the trip."

The first day's trip was made without particular incident, and the boys spent the night at a village inn as planned before leaving Clintonia. The next morning, after a good breakfast, they got an early start, expecting to reach Lumber Run before dark.

"We want to keep our eyes open for game," said Joe, after they had been on the way for some time. He scanned the thick woods on each side of the river. "We may get a shot at a bird or a rabbit and it would come in handy for lunch."

"Speaking of lunch," put in Jimmy hopefully, "when do we eat?"

"It isn't any more than ten o'clock yet," laughed Joe. "Snap out of it, Doughnuts, old boy. We've got a good long way to travel yet before we surround any grub."

Jimmy groaned but made no protest.

During the long morning the boys covered many miles. They had not as yet met any of the heavy drifts that the prophet of gloom had predicted. But after a while Joe noticed that Bob looked frequently at the sky and that after each look he became a little more silent and preoccupied.

"What's on your mind, Bob?" Joe asked curiously. "You seem worried about something."

For answer Bob pointed to a piled-up bank of clouds that scudded with ever increasing velocity toward the bright disc of the sun.

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, those clouds mean snow," he said. "Snow will mean slow going for us, and we're a good many miles from Lumber Run, you know."

Joe regarded the clouds with increased interest not unmixed with a tinge of anxiety.

"I believe you're right," he said. "But we'll be able to pull through all right, even if it does snow."

Bob started to speak, but checked himself, pointing to a dense thicket close to the edge of the river.

"I see something moving in there," he said in a low voice. "Perhaps it's partridges."

"Partridges!" exclaimed Joe. "Let's get our guns ready. We may get a shot at them."

They stopped and lifted the guns, which had been placed on top of the other luggage in readiness for just such an occasion as this. In his excitement, Jimmy, as he directed his gun toward the thicket accidentally pulled the trigger. The shot echoed loudly and made the boys jump. Worse than that, it startled the birds.

There was a whirr of wings and several partridges started from cover and were off like the wind.

Bob straightened out the frown on his face and smiled.

"Oh, well, better luck next time," he said. "We may pop off something yet."

So they started on again with renewed vigor, skates striking sparks from the gleaming ice, sled slithering along behind them. The brisk wind brought the blood stinging to their faces and nipped their fingers and toes, even through the thick gloves and heavy shoes they wore.

"The temperature's dropping, I'll bet," said Joe, as he pulled off a glove and blew on his reddened fingers. "Shouldn't wonder if it would be close to zero to-night."

"Hope we find a shack somewhere that will give us shelter," said Jimmy. "We'll not make the camp in this weather and I'm not especially keen about spending a night in the open."

"There's plenty of wood about," replied Herb. "We could get up a roaring fire and sleep on the lee side of it. But I guess we won't be reduced to that. We may find some farm near the river where the people will take us in for the night. Or there may be some trapper's hut where we can find shelter. Don't let's worry about it, anyway, until we have to."

At that moment they were skating not far from the shore. Suddenly, without saying anything, Bob snatched up his gun and fired. One barrel

followed the other so quickly that they were blended in one explosion.

The startled boys looked in the direction in which Bob had been aiming and were amazed to see two birds fall from a flock that had started up from behind a bush.

With a whoop they rushed toward the spot and found two dead partridges. Other birds could be seen vanishing in the distance.

"For the love of Pete, how did you do it, Bob?" cried Joe, as he picked up one of the birds.

"Just plain luck," declared Bob. "There's no use in pretending I took aim, for I didn't. That is, I simply shot in the direction that I saw a movement and just caught a couple as they came above the bush. I had to act quickly, or I'd have given you fellows a chance at them, too. But if I'd waited for a second, they would have been off."

"Don't apologize," replied Joe, grinning. "We owe you a vote of thanks."

"Carried unanimously," said Jimmy, licking his lips. "Say, what a feast those birds will make! Now, don't you fellows tell me again that it isn't time for lunch."

There was no dissent this time, for the keen air had already whetted appetites that needed no whetting.

They might have had some difficulty in start-

ing a fire in the snowbound woods, but luck came to their relief. Herb's eyes, scanning the woods, caught sight of a little cleft between some rocks that broadened further on into a shallow cave in which they found a supply of dry wood, probably left by some previous camper. A yell of delight greeted the discovery, and the boys soon had a roaring fire that warmed their fingers and toes and heightened their spirits immeasurably.

The birds were plucked and prepared for roasting expertly, for the boys had had considerable experience in their various adventures in the woods. They whittled two sticks to sharp points, impaled the partridges on them, and roasted them over the crackling blaze.

The aroma quickened their already keen appetites, and before the birds were browned to a degree externally that promised tender, juicy meat internally the lads were sure there never had been such hunger as theirs.

Never had meal tasted like that one! They ate until even Jimmy was satisfied. Then they put out the fire and prepared to start once more on the trail.

Speeding again over the crystal surface of the river, they noted that now the sun had disappeared entirely behind the banks of cloud. The temperature had dropped still further. A shrill wind whistled through the trees on the shore.

"The storm's going to be a good one," prophesied Bob.

A fierce gust of wind carried a flurry of snow into the boys' faces. The boughs of the trees bent beneath the blasts that followed in quick succession. A sombre gray settled down upon the skaters, blotting out everything at a distance. Then the snow began to whirl about them, covering them at once in a mantle of white from head to foot.

The boys looked at each other gravely.

"Guess we're in for it," muttered Joe. "It looks like a race for shelter before the snow gets the best of us."

"You never said a truer thing, Joe," replied Bob soberly. "Hustle is the word from now on."

The boys tightened the mufflers about their throats, pulled their caps further down over their eyes, and forged ahead at a swifter pace over the frozen river.

CHAPTER VII

RACING WITH THE STORM

It was soon evident that the Radio Boys had not over-estimated the gravity of the situation.

The storm rushing down upon them from the north was no ordinary one and, if present appearances were to be believed, promised a genuine blizzard such as had not been seen for many a day along the Shagary.

A great many miles remained to be covered before they could reach Lumber Run, and every one of those miles seemed in the face of the blizzard to be multiplied by ten.

Then, too, the lads had gotten beyond the farming country and were in the lumber region where houses were few and far between. If there were any scattered villages, they stood far back from the river, and there was no sign to indicate their presence.

"Guess we'd better take off our skates," panted Bob Layton, the words literally whipped from his lips. "They're more of a hindrance than a help to us just now."

The snow was falling heavily, and the boys could not see twenty feet ahead of them. It was drifting, too, and was already above their shoe tops.

Even cheerful Herb, who was wont to make light of difficulties, became anxious.

"At this rate we won't reach Lumber Run until long after dark," he said to Bob, who was next to him.

"I doubt very much if we'll reach it at all today," replied Bob soberly.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Jimmy, swinging his hands about his body to warm them. "If we have to stay out in this blizzard all night, there won't be much left of us."

"Bob's right, just the same," said Joe, who had been peering anxiously ahead and now turned to the others with a dubious shake of his head. "At this rate, if the snow keeps on falling, we'll never reach the camp before night."

"We may find shelter somewhere in the woods, and we'd better find it as soon as we can," said Bob. "After dark we'd be put to it to find any place at all."

So it was agreed that they should leave the river and press into the woods, in the hope of finding some shelter in which they could pass the night.

Despite a pretense of cheerfulness that all tried

to maintain, the boys were not blind to the dangers of their plight. A night in the open in such a storm was not to be regarded lightly even with the aid of a fire.

By this time the snow was like a heavy swirling mist before their eyes. They could see only a few yards ahead of their stumbling feet. The sled, heavily weighted as it was, held them back as though seeking to aid in their destruction. They made their way forward doggedly, but ever and again were forced to stop to rest and get their breath.

It was Jimmy, struggling manfully, who fell inch by inch, foot by foot, behind the others, until he was in imminent danger of being separated from the rest of the party.

"Can't make it, fellows!" he called out in a voice that barely carried above the howling of the wind. "You'll either have to slow up or leave me behind, one or the other. I hate to own it, but these drifts have got me beat."

The boys in the van halted, waiting for their struggling comrade to catch up with them. Bob looked about him ruefully.

"Guess we'll have to build ourselves an Eskimo igloo or something like that," he said. "We might heap up a mound of snow and then hollow out a space big enough for us to crowd in together and keep each other warm by the con-

tact of our bodies. Looks as though that's the only kind of shelter we're likely to find tonight."

"Wouldn't be half bad an idea at that," replied Herb. "They say those snow houses are mighty snug. I'd get inside of anything that would keep this snow away from me."

"Sounds like a forlorn hope," said Joe dubiously.

"Still, we may have to come to that," declared Bob gravely. "We'll go on for a way, though, and see if we strike something else."

"One of us will walk on each side of Jimmy and help him along," suggested Herb.

But this Jimmy stoutly refused to allow.

"I can follow all right, if you don't go too fast," he insisted. "My wind gave out, that's all."

There was small danger now of his comrades going too fast. The drifts were steadily deepening, so that in some places it was almost impossible to drag the sled through them. Their progress slowed to a crawl. They were chilled through, shivering, hungry.

Then suddenly Joe Atwood cried out. He had caught his foot against something and measured his length on the snow.

The other boys hastened to him as fast as they could. When they reached him, he had struggled

to his knees and was looking about him bewilderedly.

"My foot struck something, but I don't know what!" he exclaimed. "It was pretty solid though, I can tell you. Bet my toe'll be sore for a week."

An exclamation came from Bob.

"What Joe stumbled over," announced Bob, "was a stump, used I think for a chopping block. And there's the shack it belongs to!"

The boys followed the direction of his pointing finger. There, sure enough, through the thick snow curtain, they discerned the dark outline of a dilapidated cabin.

Snow had drifted deep about the building; the rough door was half covered with a drift.

"Looks as if there hadn't been any one here for a long, long time," observed Jimmy.

"This door hasn't been opened lately, that's a sure thing," agreed Joe.

"Let's get busy and clear away the snow," suggested Bob, and all fell to work with a will.

It took but a short time to clear the doorway. Herb took hold of the latch and pushed.

The door groaned, rusty hinges protesting against the intrusion. Then it opened slowly and finally swung wide.

The boys crowded within, eager for relief from the buffeting wind and blinding snow.

"Better get the sled in, too," suggested Herb,

as Jimmy was about to slam the door shut. "If we don't, it will be snowed under in no time."

The sled was dragged in and stowed away in one corner of what proved to be a fairly large room. Then the Radio Boys slammed the door against the bitter, searching wind and shot home the heavy iron bolt.

"Look! There's a fireplace," cried Jimmy, pointing to a cavernous space fitted with rough stones plastered with clay. "Not so bad, fellows."

"Let's take a look around," said Herb eagerly. "I have a hunch there may be a lean-to——"

"And maybe a woodshed," interrupted Joe. "All the comforts of home for weary wanderers."

They found no woodshed, but in a lean-to—a small apartment not much bigger than a closet off the main shack—there was a heap of firewood as dry as tinder.

"Enough to make this place as warm as toast," exulted Bob. "When you think where we might have been now," he added happily, "this doesn't look so bad."

After they had eaten their supper, saving part of what still remained in the generous lunch hamper for breakfast, they sprawled before the roaring fire they had built and thanked their stars that they were so comfortably sheltered.

"All we need now is to set up our radio," murmured Jimmy.

"Some people are never satisfied," grinned Herb. "There'd be too much static to-night for the radio to bring us in much of a program. I'm so dead tired, anyway, that all I can think of is sleep."

"I guess that's the way with all of us," put in Joe. "I could sleep standing up."

There was no need, however, of putting his statement to the proof, for the shack was provided with two rough but broad bunks, each capable of accommodating two of the boys. They got some blankets from the sled, and without removing anything but their shoes tumbled in. They needed no sleeping draughts to insure slumber—the day's toil had taken care of that—and in a few minutes they were fast asleep, dead to the world.

It must have been hours later that Bob sat upright in his bunk with a violent start. He sat there with every sense alert, straining his ears to catch again the sound that had awakened him!

CHAPTER VIII

A SHOT IN THE DARK

Bob Layton could see nothing, hear nothing. Yet he knew with a strange certainty that something was wrong.

His eyes searched the cabin, seeking to penetrate the thick gloom. Then his glance leaped to the window and rested there, fascinated.

Two points of green fire burned on the further side of the grimy and cracked glass. The sight filled him with a strange, almost superstitious dread. There was something weird, uncanny, terrifying about those points of light gleaming against the black background of the night.

The points moved, and the motion broke the spell that held Bob bound to the bunk. He leaped to the floor and ran to the corner where they had stowed the sled. He reached for a gun, and as he did so Jimmy's rifle fell to the floor of the shack.

The noise awoke the other boys, who were in-

stantly out of their bunks and crowding about Bob.

"What's the matter?" cried Herb, groaning as he stubbed his toe on a stone of the fireplace. "What kind of a party do you call this, anyway?"

For answer Bob pointed to the window.

"Over there—" he began, and stopped in bewilderment. The brilliant points of light had disappeared.

Bob made a dash for the window while the other boys followed him wonderingly.

"What did you imagine you saw?" asked Joe.

"Didn't imagine anything about it," cried Bob excitedly, peering through the glass at the dark world outside the window. "Something was there, I tell you, some kind of an animal. It must have been standing with its forepaws on the windowsill, looking in. I saw it as distinctly as I see you now."

"Maybe you've been having a nightmare," Herb was beginning when Joe interrupted him.

"Look there," he said, pointing to where the clearing surrounding the cabin melted into the fringe of forest. "Do you see what I see?"

"It's an animal of some sort!" exclaimed Herb. all his incredulity vanishing.

"Looks like a wolf!" cried Jimmy. "Take a shot at him, Bob. You ought to be able to hit him at this close range."

Bob put his gun through a hole in the window pane, took aim, and pressed the trigger. But as he did so, the beast, as though warned of danger, leaped to one side and disappeared in one of the aisles of the forest.

"Too bad!" exclaimed Herb disappointedly. "Do you think you plugged him, Bob?"

"No," replied Bob, as he laid aside the rifle. "He jumped just as I pulled the trigger."

"Wonder what it was, anyway," said Jimmy, straining his eyes through the darkness. "Sure looked like a wolf to me."

"Probably was," replied Bob. "I'd like to have got that fellow just to know for a certainty what he was."

There was little sleep for the boys the rest of the night, and they were glad when morning dawned with a hard white gleam of sunshine on the glistening snow.

For the storm was over. It had been over, they remembered now, at the time of the animal scare. Coming in like a lion, it had gone out like a lamb, leaving them not nearly as snowbound as they had feared. The skies were bright, the wind had disappeared, and all was right again with their world.

They still had some of their store of firewood left. They built a roaring fire, ate what remained of their basket lunch, drinking copious draughts

of coffee, for which they got the necessary water from melted snow.

"All gone," said Herb at last, turning the basket upside down. "If we don't make Lumber Run to-day, we'll run the chance of going hungry."

"There's no chance in the world that we won't make the camp to-day," remarked Bob optimistically. "As long as the compass works we'll find our way back to the river all right. And from there on it will be plain sailing."

They started off in high spirits on the last lap of their journey to Lumber Run. Bob's compass justified the trust he put in it and led them straight back to the river, and once there they knew they could not lose their way.

It was easy going on top of the crusted snow. The boys made good progress, swiftly lessening the distance remaining between them and their goal.

Although the sun continued to shine brightly, it had little effect upon the bitter cold of the air. The snow crust remained hard and firm, and though the work of pulling the sled was tiring, the boys were grateful for the exercise. It kept their half-frozen blood in circulation and enabled them thus to withstand the full rigor of the weather.

"We'll soon be there now," announced Jimmy exultantly toward the middle of the day. "I can

recognize some of the landmarks in the neighborhood of the camp."

"Lucky for me, I guess," remarked Joe, passing a hand over his dazzled eyes. "I've got all sorts of dots and dashes before these optics of mine.

"Talk about telegraphy," grinned Herb, "he's got a code all his own."

"He's going snowblind," announced Jimmy comfortingly. "I read how that happened to the hero of a story once. The fellow went stone blind."

"Did he ever see again?" asked Joe, squinting at Jimmy.

Jimmy shook his head dolefully.

"Not that I remember," he said. "He was blind for the rest of his life."

"You ought to be an undertaker, Doughnuts," laughed Bob. "You're so full of good cheer."

"Not me," replied Jimmy, with a grin. "I'm going to be a chef at one of the big hotels where I get all the good pickings first. Hey, look!"

He paused, and his companions eagerly followed the direction of his pointing finger.

"See that clump of trees over there?" asked Jimmy. "Well, just beyond there a road turns off and that road leads to Lumber Run."

The thought that they were so near their destination sent the boys forward with new enthusiasm.

A little farther on there was an opening in the trees.

"Right through there," said Jimmy, "is the village of Lumber Run and a little beyond it is the Corning camp."

"Thought you said there was a road," remarked Herb. "I can't see any."

"So there was before the snow blotted it out," returned Jimmy. "I should think," he added in his very best manner, "that that would be apparent even to one of your low mentality."

"What book did you crib that from?" asked Herb.

"No book," replied Jimmy, with hauteur. "Those that are rich don't need to steal."

"Phew, that was a hot one," scoffed Herb.

"Anything hot is good on a day like this," laughed Joe who, with Bob, had come up to where the others stood.

"How do we find the way without any road to follow?" queried Bob.

"Easy." Jimmy squared his pudgy shoulders and thrust out his chubby chin in a way he hoped looked determined. "I've been here before, haven't I? I know the way. Just follow me, and you'll never be sorry."

"Let's hope not," was Joe's unflattering comment as they prepared to follow their guide.

It must be admitted that the others had little

faith in Jimmy Plummer as a guide through a snowclad forest where every appearance of a trail had vanished. And it was not long before they felt that their doubts were amply justified.

After they had been wandering for half an hour without seeing anything but trees and snow, Bob asked mildly:

"Don't you think it's time we were there, Doughnuts?"

Jimmy paused and rubbed a round chin with an uncertain hand.

CHAPTER IX

A HEARTY WELCOME

"OUGHT to have got to the village before this," Jimmy admitted in answer to Bob Layton's question. "Don't quite understand why we haven't."

"Probably because we've taken the wrong direction," suggested Herb heartlessly.

"We've been going east," said Joe, leaning wearily against the trunk of a giant tree. "Suppose we go north for a change. It's plain to be seen that this isn't getting us anywhere."

But Jimmy shook his head stubbornly.

"If we keep on going in this direction, we're sure to reach it," he insisted. "Must have been farther on than I thought."

"Guess it must be," assented Bob uneasily, as Jimmy started on again. "But I warn you we're not going to follow you much farther in this direction, Doughnuts. Looks to me as if it led nowhere."

"Well, go on and prospect for yourself if you

want to," said Jimmy, beginning to lose his temper. "But I don't see how you'll be much better off if you do."

As a matter of fact, neither did Bob. He found himself wishing that he had been able to see Mr. Plummer before he had left Clintonia. He might have been able to gather information from Jimmy's father as to the exact location of Lumber Run. Jimmy himself, as a guide, promised to be thoroughly unreliable.

The others followed him however, though hesitatingly. A little farther on Jimmy stopped and frankly acknowledged himself beaten.

"We'll have to go back to the river, boys," he acknowledged. "By following that we're sure to get there. It makes a big curve further up, though, and I thought I could save us all time by taking what I thought was a short cut."

"That's all right, Jimmy," said Bob, clapping the lad affectionately on the shoulder. "We all make mistakes and lots of them. So back to the river it is."

They were passing a little knoll that reared itself in the forest when on the other side of it they heard voices. They halted in their tracks.

"Looks like the youngsters had passed this way lately," a voice remarked, "and there's the marks of a sled."

"You're right smart at deductin', Sandy," came

another voice, "but where in thunder are they now?"

The boys waited to hear no more. From what they had overheard they surmised that these two men were from Lumber Run and that they had been sent out in all probability in search of the expected and delayed Radio Boys.

They rounded the knoll rapidly, and for once Jimmy beat his friends in arriving on the scene. He ran to two men who were standing there and held out a hand to each.

"Welcome, little strangers!" he cried, his round face beaming. "I'd rather see you right now than a million dollars. Boys, let me introduce Slim Jones and Sandy MacGregor. Fellows, the Radio Boys."

All shook hands heartily, mutually delighted at the meeting. It was impossible for the boys not to betray the great relief they felt.

The one addressed as Slim, a name which gave an accurate impression of his physique, eyed the lads with a lazy grin.

"What you chaps been doin'?" he asked curiously. "Takin' a walk for your health?"

It took the boys only a few minutes to tell why they had been delayed. They gave a spirited account of their adventures, able to laugh at their hardships now they were at an end, while Sandy and Slim listened with interest, occasionally in-

terrupting the narrative with some humorous comment.

"You must have passed right by Lumber Run and within a few hundred yards of the camp," observed Sandy MacGregor. "Don't know how you could do it, at that. Seems like you couldn't come so close to the camp an' yet miss it."

"Oh, we're a talented bunch," laughed Herb, "especially Doughnuts here."

"Go ahead and insult me," replied that much-put-upon youth. "I'm so glad to have met Slim and Sandy that I don't care much what you say."

By this time snow was beginning to fall again. Slim suggested that they get to camp as soon as possible.

"Looks like that blizzard which began yesterday means to finish up to-day," he said. "Reckon we'd better make camp before we get snowed under."

The Radio Boys agreed with enthusiasm. They were cold and very hungry. The picture of a warm, comfortable messroom with plenty of good, hot food was an alluring one.

So they turned toward the camp in the footsteps of their guides, the boys dragging the sled that had suddenly seemed to become light.

"Hope you brought your radios along," said Slim, with a look at the loaded sled.

Bob grinned.

"That's our big excuse for being here," he said. "You bet we wouldn't forget them."

Sandy MacGregor shook his head. He was a good-natured Scotchman, hardy and tough, with twinkling blue eyes and a wide mouth in which shone perfect teeth.

"You don't need ony excuse," he asserted. "The old man likes to have youngsters aboot the place."

"Still, the radio will come in handy," remarked Slim, with a grin. "Us fellers has been lookin' forward to it, let me tell you. In the winter seems we get snowed in so deep we feel like we're plumb out o' the world. We thought of gettin' a radio ourselves, but none of us seemed no good at settin' of it up an' keepin' it runnin' right. You boys," with a sidelong, respectful look at the chums, "must be dabsters at it."

The Radio Boys modestly disclaimed the tribute, though they admitted that they had never seen or heard of any sets that could give better results than the ones they had brought along with them.

"You see, we've tinkered a lot with them," explained Bob. "And when a new thing comes along or an improvement on an old one we get busy and find out all about it."

"It's safe to say we've tried every loud speaker

on the market," added Herb, "and we're not satisfied yet."

"That's one slick thing about radio," added Joe. "No matter how much you do, you're never through."

The two lumbermen exchanged indulgent grins.

"There's ambition for you," remarked Slim. "These kids don't care how hard they work."

"I guess they're gluttons for punishment, all right," assented Sandy.

"As far as the radio is concerned," agreed Joe. "But, anyway, tinkering with a radio isn't work. It's fun."

By this time they had reached the outskirts of the Corning camp. Sandy explained that the village of Lumber Run was not far away, but by taking the short cut they had followed they had not been obliged to pass through it.

They found the Corning camp heavily clad in snow, but active in spite of that. Men were busily clearing off the bulk of the last fall, together with the fresh white blanket that was coming down steadily.

"Can't let the snow get the best of us," remarked Slim. "It's easier to clear it as it comes along than to wait till it gets packed. More snow this year than I can remember for a long time back."

The camp consisted of a number of rude log buildings, placed in a jagged-edged half-circle about a larger building, which Slim told them was the mess hall and general living room.

From the larger building came savory odors of coffee, bacon, fried eggs that had an appeal all their own to the tired, hungry boys.

As they approached it more closely the door opened and a stream of men came forth, joking, red-faced, well-fed men who, it was clear, had just had more than a nodding acquaintance with the cook's creations.

"There's Mr. Corning!" exclaimed Jimmy. "That man over at the right talking to my dad."

The boys saw a short, stocky man with an intelligent face, who gesticulated freely with his hands and was just then engaged in an earnest conversation with Jimmy's father. Mr. Plummer glanced in the direction of the boys and came forward quickly, relief written large upon his broad, good-humored face.

"We thought you were lost," he said, throwing his arm affectionately about Jimmy's shoulder. "What on earth was it that kept you so long?"

The boys recounted their experiences, this time to a slightly larger audience than before, for many of the men had lounged within hearing. When the recital ended it was Mr. Corning who

made the suggestion that they had been waiting and hoping for.

"You must be as hungry as a pack of wolves by now," he said. "Better get inside and see what the boys have left of the grub. Slim and Sandy here will stow away your sled and unload your luggage, and I'll be somewhere around here when you come out to show you your quarters."

The Radio Boys rushed into the warm, cheerful interior of the mess house and took seats about one of the long tables, while Mr. Corning went to interview Jensen, the Swedish cook, and stir him to renewed action.

Mr. Plummer followed the boys in and took a seat near them as they prepared for trencher duty.

"I spent a pretty sleepless night," he told them, as Jensen, grinning sympathetically, came in with a heaped-up, smoking platter of beans. "When you didn't reach here by dark, Mr. Corning and I went out with searching parties, but in the storm and darkness could find no trace of you. I saw you eaten by wolves or frozen in snowdrifts all night long."

"Poor old dad," said Jimmy sympathetically, with his mouth already full of beans. "We knew that you'd be worried. We were mighty worried ourselves for a while. We'd have

notified you, but we didn't find a single wireless station along the way."

"That's strange too," said Mr. Corning, who had joined them, "considering that there are so many of them in the woods." His eyes twinkled. Then, more gravely, he turned to Bob.

"About this wolf you took a shot at last night," he said. "Did you get a good look at it? Are you sure it was a wolf?"

"I'm not sure of anything," Bob admitted. "It might have been a fox, only it seemed a bit large for that."

"I shouldn't wonder if it were a wolf, all right," said Mr. Corning. "I've heard considerable howling around the camp that couldn't have been made by anything else. There are plenty of them the other side of the Canadian border and some of them may have crossed the line. You boys want to be on your guard, if you go any distance from the camp."

"Well, whatever it was it didn't get us," observed Herb, "and that's the main thing."

"It is indeed," agreed Mr. Plummer, and fell into preoccupation.

As though his father's thoughtful mood had suggested something to him, Jimmy asked:

"Have you seen anything of that fellow you were looking for, Dad? What was his name—Pelton?"

"No to the first question, yes to the second," replied Mr. Plummer, with a faint smile. "I've scouted round pretty thoroughly, but so far I haven't caught a glimpse of Jason Pelton. He's a slippery customer, all right."

"You said it," agreed Jimmy ruefully. "Never mind, Dad. You just leave it to us boys. We'll find Jason Pelton for you, if we have to use the radio to do it."

"Why not?" laughed Bob. "Radio's tracking down criminals all the time. There isn't a single up-to-date police department to-day that doesn't use it. There are hundreds behind the bars that wouldn't be there if radio hadn't been on the job."

"Three cheers for radio!" cried Herb, as he finished his third helping and leaned back contentedly.

"You boys seem to be in love with radio," put in Mr. Corning, smiling.

"Why shouldn't we be?" replied Bob enthusiastically. "It's the greatest thing in the world!"

CHAPTER X

ROUGH CHARACTERS

MR. CORNING smiled at Bob Layton's earnestness.

"That's rather a broad statement, isn't it?" he asked.

"Not too broad," maintained Bob stoutly. "If you'll show me anything more important, I'll take it back."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if you were right," conceded Mr. Corning, genially. "Suppose now you let me take a look at your sets. I'd like to see them."

"Sure thing," replied Bob. "As a matter of fact, we're rather anxious to take a look at them ourselves to make sure that nothing happened to them on the journey."

"I wish the radio would help me find that rascally Jason Pelton," murmured Mr. Plummer, half to himself. "I need that two thousand dollars he got from me the worst way."

The lumberjacks were no longer in evidence,

having scattered to their afternoon's work in the woods. Mr. Corning led the way across the clearing to a cabin on the outskirts of the camp that had been set aside for the Radio Boys during their stay. There they found the sled up-ended against the side of the cabin while inside was the luggage that had been unloaded by Slim and Sandy.

The boys fell eagerly upon their sets, examined them solicitously, and found with relief that nothing had befallen them from the stormy weather or the rough journey.

They explained the working of both the sending and receiving sets to Mr. Corning. He had paid little attention to the wonderful science hitherto, but he was an intelligent listener and readily grasped the principles involved. It was evident that he had in him the makings of an enthusiast.

"I guess Bob didn't put it too strongly, after all," he remarked. "It's surely a marvelous thing. I'm right glad that you boys brought your sets along. And my men will be just as glad. They're mighty hard workers, and they need something like this to relieve the monotony of the long winter nights. It's a safe bet that you'll have an appreciative audience. But I've got to be off now to supervise a job down near the river. You boys make yourselves right at home. I think you'll

find your cabin comfortable, and if there's anything you want, don't be afraid to ask for it."

They thanked him heartily and then took a look about their new quarters. They found them commodious and warm. Bunks stretched about two sides of it in double tiers. At the end farthest from the door was a big stove in which a hot fire was glowing. Near the stove was a small table and in the center a larger one. These, with a few rough hand-made chairs, completed the furnishings of the place. It was rude but comfortable and the warmth was especially grateful to the boys after their exposure to the heavy storm.

Joe's eyes fell upon the small table near the stove.

"Just the place for the receiving set," he gloated. "It seems as though it were made for it."

All four fell to work with a will, getting the receiving set ready for service.

Fearing that there might be some difficulty about getting up an outdoor aerial, they had brought a loop aerial along. But of the two they preferred the former, and they were glad to find a slender tree not far from the shack that would serve admirably for a pole. So, while the other boys attached the wire to the set and bored holes in the wall to pass it through, Bob shinned up the

tree like a monkey and in a little while had the aerial in place.

They made their ground connection and, when everything was in shape, tuned in on WGY at Schenectady. A violin solo was being rendered at the moment and the glorious notes of the interlude of Cavalleria Rusticana fairly flooded the room with melody.

The boys looked at each other, their eyes shining with delight.

"Working like a charm!" exulted Bob.

"It sure will make these lumberjacks sit up and take notice," chuckled Joe.

"Mighty little static, too, considering the snowstorm," observed Jimmy. "I guess we're all set for our first concert."

They were so absorbed in the program that the afternoon passed rapidly, and they were surprised when the stentorian voice of Jensen sounded the call for supper.

The men came trooping in from the woods with wolfish appetites, and the boys looked at them with wonder as the heaped-up platters of meat, potatoes and other vegetables melted away. They were pretty hearty eaters themselves, but, with the exception of Jimmy, they were free to admit that they were outclassed. That youth, however, held his own with the best of the men.

"Goin' to give us some of that radio to-night?"

Slim asked of Bob, who was sitting beside him.

"Bet your boots we are!" returned Bob, with a smile.

"Bill here," went on Slim with a grin, indicating a neighbor, "says there ain't no such thing as radio. Says it's a fake."

"Not exactly that," corrected Bill. "But there's a ketch in it somewhere. Stands to reason you can't hear things hundreds of miles away."

"You'll change your mind before long," laughed Bob, as the men, having finished, pushed back their chairs. "Come right over to our shack now, and we'll prove it to you."

Eagerly the men followed Bob and watched as he manipulated the set.

Instantly sound filled the small room, a room that soon became somewhat close with tobacco smoke and the crowding of many bodies. A jazz tune, rollicking and gay, from one of the New York stations set the toes of the lumberjacks tapping the floor and their shoulders swaying in time to the syncopated rhythm.

"We can get you something classier, if you like," said Bob over his shoulder. "All you've got to say is what you want, and we can tune in on any of a dozen programs."

"Jazz for mine," vociferated Slim. "No op'ry overtoors fur me when you can get jazz like that. Baby, it's hot stuff!"

Slim appeared to voice the general sentiment of those present. At any rate, there was no dissenting voice. For a time they were unanimous for jazz.

As the music became madder and merrier, so did the mood of the lumberjacks. One after the other they leaped to their feet to give a jig, a Highland fling, or an exaggerated heel-and-toe.

At a pause between numbers, Sandy MacGregor rather hesitatingly asked if there was anything Scotch on any of the programs.

Bob consulted the list which he had been careful to bring with him.

"How about Annie Laurie?" he said. "That's on at WGY and it's just about time for it."

"It's a bonnie tune," said Sandy wistfully.

A moment later the words of the immortal ballad came over the air, sung by a soprano of distinction. Even the wildest spirits were tamed and thrilled by its beauty, and Sandy especially had a lump in his throat as he listened.

Then, without saying anything, Bob tuned in on another station, and the words of a speaker from Washington were heard so clearly that some of the men involuntarily jumped and looked around them to see who had entered the room. The subject was one of national interest and gripped the attention of all.

"That feller seemed to know what he was talking about," volunteered Slim.

"He ought to," returned Bob, with a smile. "That was the President of the United States."

There was a gasp of astonishment, not unmixed with incredulity.

"Gwan," said one of the men unbelievingly.

"You're kiddin' us," declared another.

"Honest Injun," Bob assured them, and his earnestness at last carried conviction.

Perhaps nothing in the evening's program so deeply impressed the men as this. They had never seen the President. They had never been to Washington. They had never dreamed it possible that in any way they would come in contact with the head of the nation. Yet here they were in the snowbound camp in the woods hearing his voice just as distinctly as did any one of the great visible audience he was addressing.

It was a great night, one of the most thrilling that the men had ever known, and it firmly fixed the Radio Boys' popularity in the Corning camp.

The "Radio Shack," as their cabin came to be known, served as a rendezvous for the lumberjacks during their time off from their hard and often dangerous work.

At first, what they most wanted was jazz and plenty of it. But after they had heard some really good music it was surprising to see how thirstily

they came back for more of the same sort. Many of these rough, uncouth, but in the main good-hearted fellows found in themselves an unsuspected capacity for the appreciation of the finest things.

They liked to join in on some of the oldtime melodies they knew, and on the boys' first Sunday in camp the hymns were sung with a gusto and goodwill that threatened to lift the roof from the "Radio Shack."

The boys, however, had not been in camp more than a day or two before they learned that here, as in most other places, there were rough characters who formed an exception to the general simple-hearted, good-natured type that prevailed.

There, for instance, was Rafe Wilson, a great black-bearded, brutal-jawed fellow, who would have none of the boys or their radio, and who, for that matter, held sullenly aloof from most of the men in the camp. He seemed to be the spokesman for and leader of a small group of men like himself. They were huge-fisted, bull-necked fellows, with thin, tight lips and sullen eyes.

They had come from Canada, as the border was not far away. Most of the Canadians were good fellows, but Wilson and his cronies were of a different kind. They kept closely to themselves,

and the bulk of the men gave them a wide berth.

"Looks to me as though those fellows were up to some mischief," Herb remarked two days after their arrival in camp.

The boys had been down to Lumber Run on an errand, and upon returning had passed Rafe and a number of his followers. To the boys' cheerful greeting the men returned no answer whatever.

"Kind of queer, but I was thinking the same thing," admitted Joe. "Notice how they shut up as soon as they saw us? They could give points to a clam."

"None too pleasant looks they turned our way, either," added Bob thoughtfully. "Surly rascals, the bunch of them. Not like most of the other men in camp."

"I should say not! Look at Slim, Sandy, Reddy, Payne, and that crowd. No better lot living," declared Herb. "But that Wilson crowd—well, I wouldn't trust them further than I could see them."

"Dad says they're beginning to make trouble for Mr. Corning," was Jimmy's contribution. "Rafe went to him a few days ago and demanded an increase in wages."

His comrades turned toward Jimmy with interest.

"He'd be just the kind to start something like that," remarked Joe.

"What did Mr. Corning say?" inquired Bob curiously.

"Told them nothing doing," replied Jimmy. "Dad says the Corning men are paid better wages than any of the lumbermen in the other logging camps. Most of the men have been with Mr. Corning for years, and they're devoted to him. Wouldn't work for any one else."

"Are these fellows new, then?" asked Herb Fennington.

"Just signed up this fall," returned Jimmy, proud of his fund of information. "They never have been liked by the rest of the men, dad says, and they've never tried to get in the good graces of the old hands, either."

"I wonder what they were whispering about when we came up to them," murmured Joe, thinking aloud.

"Mad as the mischief about not getting their increase, probably," surmised Jimmy.

"Plotting revenge, perhaps," added Herb hopefully. "There may be some real excitement coming."

"I guess they won't be able to make much real trouble if all the other men are as strong as Jimmy says for Mr. Corning," observed Bob. "However," with a backward glance at the black-browed men they had left, "shouldn't wonder if they were planning to have a try, anyway. I

think it might be a good idea to keep an eye on Rafe Wilson and his friends."

It was two days after this conversation that a curious happening occurred at the Corning Camp.

To the south of the camp was the great snow-slide leading down to the river. Here the giant logs, hewn in the forest, began their romantic journey, first to the frozen surface of the river, then later, when the ice broke up, down the river to the mills, then to the factories, where by the magic of modern industry rough-barked monarchs of the woods were transformed into beautiful and graceful or merely serviceable aids to the progress and comfort of mankind.

The Radio Boys loved to watch the logs start to the top of the incline, come thundering down at railroad speed and then take the long leap that ended on the ice-bound river.

On the morning in question the boys were talking with Mr. Corning at his usual post on one side of the steep incline, when Bob, looking casually up the incline, saw something that drove the blood from his face.

"Jump!" he shouted frantically. "Quick! Jump for your lives!"

CHAPTER XI

A NARROW ESCAPE

Bob Layton's shout rang out like a clarion call.

Warned by his cry of some danger that they could not stop to analyze, those near the slide obeyed instinctively, automatically.

They leaped backward, hampered by the heavy snow, stumbled, floundered, dragged themselves clear. At the same moment, to the accompaniment of a hoarse cry from the lumbermen at the top of the slide, a heavy object landed with a thud upon the exact spot where Mr. Corning and the Radio Boys had been but a moment before. The snow, dislodged by the impact, sprayed over them as they scrambled to their feet.

Rubbing the snow from his eyes, Jimmy pointed to an object almost entirely buried in the snow.

"A log!" he cried. "It slipped from the slide and fell just where we were standing."

There was a tumult of voices, and the boys

looked up to see several men scrambling down the steep incline toward them. These reached Mr. Corning's side and engaged him in excited conversation.

The owner of the lumber camp looked about him, a heavy frown on his face.

"How did that happen?" he demanded.

Slim, who was foreman of the gang, hesitated.

"It sure was sloppy work on the part of the two fellows who were supposed to sling that log on right," he said. "They let it loose from the chains before they gave it the proper direction an' it jumped the slide."

"Who were the men who had charge of that?" Mr. Corning asked, with an ominous quiet in his tone.

"Rafe Wilson an' Hank Bixby," answered Slim. "The fact is, they've got hold of some sort o' liquor somewheres an' they ain't quite themselves this mornin'."

Mr. Corning turned and climbed up the hill to the top of the slide where he found Rafe Wilson and one of his cronies. Their faces were flushed and there was something in their eyes that revealed the fact that they had been drinking.

"What kind of work do you call this, Wilson, and you, Bixby?" demanded Mr. Corning sharply. "I thought you were real lumberjacks that knew your business."

"So we are, and don't let no one tell you different," growled Wilson surlily.

"The best of us will make a slip sometimes," muttered Bixby, avoiding however the boss's eye.

"That slip came near killing me and these boys here," said Mr. Corning. "One more slip like that and you fellows will lose your jobs. Get me?"

"There's other jobs," muttered Wilson, but in a tone so low that Mr. Corning did not catch it.

"What's that you said?" demanded Mr. Corning.

"Nuthin'," muttered Wilson.

"You fellows have been drinking," charged their employer. "You know I don't allow liquor in this camp."

"Ain't had a drop," declared Wilson truculently.

"I know better," replied their employer. "Now listen to what I say. The next time you do anything of this kind you're fired. Slim," he added, turning to the foreman, "put these men at some work where they can do no damage and put two other men at the work of sending down these logs."

Slim gave some curt orders to the men and they slunk away, muttering to themselves.

"They're bad medicine, Mr. Corning," said Slim. "I have more trouble with Rafe Wilson

and that bunch of his than with all the other men put together."

"I know it," replied Mr. Corning, his brows drawn together in a worried frown. "But we're short-handed now, and we'll try to get along with them for the rest of the season. But next year they'll have to find jobs somewhere else."

He went off to another part of the camp, and the Radio Boys strolled away together, still somewhat shaken by their narrow escape from maiming or death.

"Gee, but that was a close call!" murmured Herb.

"I'll be feeling my arms and legs for the rest of the day to make sure I'm all here," said Joe.

"You don't for a minute suppose that they saw us there and did that thing on purpose, do you?" asked Jimmy thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't like to go as far as that," replied Bob. "No, they're pretty tough, but they're probably not murderers. Anyway, there'd be no reason for that. They simply had their skins full of liquor and were so befuddled they didn't know how to do their work right."

"All the same, I wouldn't be a bit sorry to have them fly the coop," returned Joe.

"Nobody'd complain much if they did," commented Herb. "All the decent fellows in the camp dislike them."

"Well, don't let's worry any more about it," said Bob. "We've got off alive and sound and that's all that matters. What's the matter with going up into the north section? Slim tells me they're fixing up a new high lead tree. That may be interesting."

"What's a high lead tree?" asked Jimmy, taking a surreptitious bite of a doughnut and thrusting it back hastily into his pocket.

"A fellow that doesn't share his grub with his pals oughtn't to be told anything," observed Bob severely.

"It's the last one I have," explained Jimmy, "and I'm not roughneck enough to offer to my friends anything I've already bitten into. It wouldn't be polite."

"Your delicacy does you credit," returned Bob sarcastically. "We'll pass over the fact that you could have offered them some before you'd bitten into it. A high lead tree, Doughnuts, is a big tall one that has had the limbs lopped from it so that it resembles the mast of a ship. Then blocks and pulleys are attached to it and by the aid of ropes the logs are hauled out from the places where they have fallen and loaded on the wagons or flat cars or whatever else they use for that purpose."

"Must be some job for a fellow to climb that and cut off the boughs and branches as he goes

along," commented Herb, as they turned their steps in the direction of the north section.

"It is," replied Bob, "and sometimes a mighty dangerous one. Slim says it's only a crackerjack lumberman that can do it. More than one has been killed at it."

On their way the boys passed Rafe Wilson and Hank Bixby, who had been set to the work of felling trees. That they were in an ugly mood was evident by the constant muttering to themselves that they kept up and by the viciousness with which they slashed into the trees.

They looked up as the boys passed by, and their eyes narrowed to slits of malignant flame.

"Something tells me we're not exactly popular with those two," murmured Herb.

"I don't see what they have against us," remarked Joe. "We haven't done anything to them."

"They're sore perhaps because we heard them being called down by the boss," suggested Bob. "Probably they wouldn't have minded the roasting so much if he'd talked to them in private. But we couldn't help being on the spot."

The boys soon reached the section of which they were in search. Fallen monarchs of the forest lay all around them and others were falling. Every few minutes there would be a tremendous crash and a quick scattering of the workmen as

a great tree measured its length on the ground.

In the center of the clearing one exceedingly tall tree had been permitted to stand. It rose to a height of nearly two hundred feet.

The reason for its exemption was apparent when a man wearing a heavy lineman's belt, with an ax and saw attached to it, came out from a near-by group and began to climb the tree. He went up it with a sureness and celerity that were explained by the sharp spurs attached to his boots, that bit deeply into the tree and gave him a solid footing.

Reaching the lower branches he began his lopping process, using either the axe or saw as circumstances dictated, and the boughs began to come down with a rush.

Up and up he went, leaving the trunk denuded as he ascended, until he reached the dizzy height of about one hundred and fifty feet.

From that point up, the tree tapered to a point. The trunk was becoming so thin that it was dangerous for the man to trust himself to it.

"Now he's goin' to top it," observed Slim, near whom the boys happened to be standing.

"What do you mean by topping?" asked Jimmy.

"Cutting the trunk through above his head," was the reply.

"But there's nearly fifty feet of trunk and

limbs above him!" exclaimed Bob. "Isn't it likely to swing back and knock him loose from the tree?"

"That sometimes happens," replied Slim gravely. "But a bigger danger is that he may be shaken loose from the tree or that the part beneath him may split. Then he'd probably plunge down. Of course, he's got his rope, but even if it catches him it may yank him up with a broken back or it may leave him hangin' head downward. Oh, bein' a high rigger is a man's job, all right."

With their hearts in their mouths, the Radio Boys watched as the rigger proceeded to saw through the trunk above his head. Steadily the saw bit into the wood, and as it progressed the boys could see a trembling go through the top of the tree. It shook as with an ague.

There was an ominous crackling. The rigger pulled his saw from the tree and crouched down with his arms in a death grip about that portion of the trunk nearest him.

Then, with a tremendous roar, the great mass above—itself as large as an ordinary tree—swung out into space. It hung for a moment, as though reluctant to be parted from the parent trunk, and then fell to the ground below.

The wrench had been so gigantic that what was left of the tree was bent in an enormous arc,

then swung in vast circles for several minutes before it came to rest. And the brave figure on top swayed with it, holding on for dear life, hoping that his grip might not loosen, that his rope might not break.

"Gee, but he must have a grip of iron!" murmured Herb.

"Guess he's going to make it," commented Joe. "He's flirted once more with death and gotten away with it."

That afternoon the Radio Boys had occasion to go to the village of Lumber Run to get some supplies of which they were in need. To their satisfaction, and somewhat to their surprise, they had no trouble in getting just what they wanted at the general store that catered to the wants of the little community.

At the village post-office the boys received several letters. These contained good news for the most part. The exception was in Jimmy's case. He had a letter from his mother.

"She says she is terribly worried about dad's loss of that two thousand dollars," Jimmy explained to his chums. "She says he needs it to meet some pressing bills."

"It's a rank shame he can't catch the rascal who got the dough," was Bob Layton's indignant comment.

The boys were trudging back to the camp when

Herb called attention to two bulky figures walking some distance in front of them.

"Rafe Wilson and Hank Bixby, if I'm any guesser," he hazarded.

"Right the first time," agreed Joe, taking a careful look. "And look at the zigzag walk of them! Been boozing again, I shouldn't wonder."

"Let's get past them," suggested Herb. "They're holding up the procession."

The rest approved of the idea and they quickened their pace. They drew abreast of the men and had almost passed them when Joe, who was the last of the quartet, slipped on the snow. He reached out instinctively to save himself from falling and clutched Rafe Wilson's arm.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE VERGE OF A FIGHT

WITH an ugly growl, Rafe Wilson flung out his arm with such violence that Joe was unable to maintain his balance and landed in the snow half a dozen feet away.

The wantonness of the act might have aroused the most placid soul to anger. And Joe Atwood's temper at all times bordered on the hair-trigger variety.

He got to his feet and rushed over to the ruffian.

"What did you mean by that, you big stiff?" he demanded, in a voice that shook with anger.

"Easy there with them names, or I'll mash your face in," growled Rafe. "Why did you put your paws on me?"

"You know perfectly well that I didn't mean to," replied Joe. "I was falling and I grabbed at anything."

"Well, the next time you're fallin' with me around, you keep right on fallin'," retorted Rafe

truculently. "I ain't no hitchin' post for any one to tie to. Jest paste that in your hat. Now get out o' my way, because you're blockin' the road."

But Joe did not move. He stood directly before the huge bulk of the man, his eyes blazing. By this time his chums, as angry as he, had quietly lined up with him.

Rafe looked from one to the other of them with his red-rimmed eyes incredulously. Was it possible that these young upstarts dared to dispute the road with him?

"Out of my way," he roared, "or I'll break you in two."

"Other folks have said that," retorted Bob coolly, "but you see we're still here."

What might have been the outcome of the situation was never to be known, for at that moment Slim Jones, the foreman, stepped out of one of the near-by huts and came hurrying toward them.

"What's all this racket about?" he asked, as he came nearer and recognized the opposing forces.

"Just a little matter that I'm going to settle myself," growled Rafe, his red eyes gleaming with fury. "These kids need a lesson, and I'm the boy to give it to them."

"I don't know about that," returned Slim, stepping between him and the boys. "Just hold

your hosses till I get the rights of this. What's the trouble?" he asked, turning toward the Radio Boys and addressing himself especially to Bob.

"No trouble of our seeking," answered Bob. "We were coming past these men and Joe slipped. He reached out to grab something to save himself from falling, and it happened to be Wilson's arm that he caught hold of. Wilson got mad and flung Joe down into the snow. Naturally, Joe was angry at that and wanted an explanation. Then Wilson said he was going to break us in two if we didn't get out of his way."

"Is that right, Wilson?" asked Slim.

"What if it is?" growled Wilson. "I ain't goin' to have these kids layin' their paws on me."

"They only did what any one would do under the circumstances," observed Slim. "Seems to me you go off the handle mighty quick to get r'iled at a little thing like that, Wilson. Now you go right on to your quarters. You ain't goin' to break any one in two to-night. Get me?"

There was a determination in his tone that Wilson and his companion did not think it wise to disregard, and with many mutterings they slumped away through the snow.

Slim Jones and the Radio Boys stood for a moment looking after them.

"What's the matter with those fellows, anyway?" asked Jimmy. "We've tried to be as nice

with them as we could, and yet they seem to hate us worse than poison."

"I guess they hate almost everybody," replied Slim thoughtfully. "They're bad eggs. I don't think they have a friend in the camp, outside their own little bunch. If labor wasn't hard to get just now, they'd be fired in a minute. Do you mean to say that you boys were really going to stand up to them?" he asked curiously.

"You didn't see us doing any running, did you, when you came up to us?" replied Joe.

"You're sure there with the nerve," remarked Slim admiringly. "That Rafe Wilson has a reputation in the logging camps as a rough and tumble fighter, and Hank Bixby ain't any slouch with his fists either."

"Oh, I suppose they'd have licked us," replied Bob. "But we'd have tried, anyway, to make it interesting for them while it lasted."

"It wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the liquor," said Slim. "There's a whole lot of that stuff coming over the Canadian border, and those roughnecks manage to get their hands on some of it. And when they get lit up they're tough customers to handle. Well, so long, boys. Try to keep out of their way as much as possible."

"We will," promised Bob for himself and his companions. "We're not looking for trouble."

Slim left them with a wave of his hand, and

the boys walked on in the direction of their shack.

"We'll have to watch our step from now on," murmured Herb. "Those fellows would down us if they could."

"Just as well to keep our eyes open, I suppose," answered Bob carelessly. "They don't like us, and it's quite as certain that we don't dote on them. But I doubt if they'll deliberately plan to do us mischief."

On the following morning one of the men who brought supplies to the camp mentioned having seen traces of deer at a point about five miles away.

Instantly the Radio Boys were agog with interest.

"What do you say to going on a hunt for them?" asked Bob.

"Suit me to a dot," replied Joe. "But we ought to have a rifle apiece. We have only two of them, and a shotgun's no use on a deer hunt."

"I guess we can fix that up for you," stated Mr. Corning, who was standing near by. "One of you can take mine and Slim has a good one that I think he'll lend you. How about it, Slim?" he asked, turning to his foreman.

"Sure thing," replied Slim heartily. "A little venison wouldn't go bad as a change from the camp fare. Come right over to my shack and get the rifle."

The boys had never hunted deer before, though they had often gone out for smaller game. They were all fairly good shots, Bob being especially expert, and they felt confident of giving a good account of themselves, if the elusive quarry could be sighted.

It took only a short time for them to get ready, and then, warmly clad and well supplied with ammunition and food, they set out eagerly on their quest.

"Gee, wouldn't it be great to bring down a buck and have his head and horns to hang up in a fellow's room?" gloated Jimmy in anticipation.

"I'll do the bringing down and Jimmy can carry him into camp," announced Herb, grinning.

"That ought to be easy," laughed Joe. "It probably wouldn't weigh more than two hundred pounds and Jimmy wouldn't mind a trifle like that."

With jest and laughter they trudged along, rejoicing in the bright sunshine and the crisp, delightful air that seemed to put new life in their veins. It was one of the days when it was good to be young and to be alive.

The snow was hard, and they made their way over it with little difficulty, although they broke through in places where it had drifted heavily. They had carefully noted the place where the messenger had seen the deer tracks, and by the

aid of Bob's compass anticipated little difficulty in locating it.

After perhaps two hours of walking, Bob stopped and bent over some marks in the snow.

"Looks as though we'd struck them," he announced after a moment's examination. "Any of you fellows know deer tracks when you see them?"

None of them did with certainty, but these were certainly tracks of some animal, and from the shape and the distance between them it seemed that whatever made them must be as large as a deer.

The tracks led away from them and, unfortunately, the wind was in the same direction. Inexperienced as they were, they knew that if they approached the deer from windward their scent would carry, and they would have no chance of getting near their quarry, which would be off like a flash.

"Seems to me we're in a sort of quandary," muttered Bob. "If we follow the tracks, the wind will go with us. If we make a circle to get to leeward, we'll lose sight of the tracks. So there you are. What are we going to do?"

"Does seem as though we were up against it," commented Herb.

"Why couldn't that deer have been headed into the wind?" said Jimmy mournfully.

"Beats all how inconsiderate he is of our feelings," laughed Joe.

"I'll tell you how we might fix it," suggested Bob, as a thought struck him. "Two of us can make a wide circle, say a couple of miles or so, and maybe in that way get to leeward of the deer. The other two could wait here until they thought the first two had had time to get in position. Then they could begin to follow these tracks and not mind whether the deer caught sight of them or not. If he did, it would only make him run faster toward the fellows who would be lying in wait for him and they'd have a chance for a shot."

"That's a bully idea," applauded Joe.

"The only trouble with it is that only two of us would have a chance to pot him," said Herb.

"That's true," assented Bob. "But it's better that two should have a chance than that none of us should. To make it perfectly fair, we'll draw lots for the two that are to go ahead. How does that strike you?"

"Fair enough," replied Joe, and as the others echoed him they lost no time in putting the plan into execution.

Fate decreed that Bob and Herb should be the ones to go ahead. They started at once to describe a wide circle, figuring that in about forty

minutes it would be time for Joe and Jimmy to start following the tracks.

"One other thing," Bob had said on leaving. "If you fellows see the deer, take a crack at it with your rifle. It won't matter whether you hit it or not. The noise of the report will be our notification to be ready for him, and we'll have that much better chance."

Joe and Jimmy waited the allotted time and then went on, following the tracks. They did this with caution, taking advantage of all the shelter that the woods afforded. It is true that they had little expectation of getting within range for a shot of their own. Yet they hugged the possibility to their breast.

What a joke it would be on Bob and Herb, if they, Joe and Jimmy, whom fate had cast for the minor position, should after all be the ones to bag the deer!

They had traveled for about a mile when a sharp hiss came from Joe.

"Duck, Jimmy!" he said. "I see him!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE GRAY SHADOW

In an instant Jimmy Plummer had dived behind a tree, while Joe Atwood hid behind another.

Peering cautiously out from their hiding places, they saw a large buck in a glade about a hundred and fifty yards away. It was browsing on the bark of trees, as the ground was so deeply covered with snow that no other forage was within reach.

It was a long shot for young marksmen, and the chances were against their making it successfully.

"Don't you think we might get a little nearer?" whispered Jimmy. "The wind has died down now and maybe he won't get our scent."

"It's worth the attempt, anyway," Joe whispered back. "If we can get twenty yards closer, we'd have a chance of bringing him down."

Dropping down on their stomachs and taking advantage of every bit of cover, they had made

about ten yards of the proposed twenty when suddenly the buck stiffened.

His nostrils dilated as he sniffed the air and he drew his feet together preparatory to a spring.

"It's all up," groaned Joe. "Fire, Jimmy!"

Both their rifles spoke at once. But even as they leaped to their feet and lifted their weapons to their shoulders, the buck darted off.

The boys looked lugubriously at each other.

"Stung!" groaned Jimmy.

"Two good cartridges gone to waste," muttered Joe.

"Maybe not," rejoined Jimmy. "They've warned Bob and Herb at least to be on the lookout."

They trudged along in the direction that the deer had taken, expecting at almost any moment to hear the reports of their companions' rifles.

In the meantime Bob and Herb had found what they regarded as an ideal hiding place.

It was a spot at which a great tree had fallen, digging a deep furrow in the earth. It was right in the path along which, according to their calculations, the deer would be likely to come.

They worked their way among the branches of the fallen tree until they had reached a spot where they could see and yet not be seen. The trunk itself furnished a good rest for the rifles. Having adjusted themselves as comfortably as

they could and assured themselves that their weapons were in perfect trim, there was nothing to do but wait.

That was the hardest thing of all to do. Before they knew it Bob and Herb found that their teeth were chattering.

"W-what's the matter?" stammered Bob. "Cold?"

"N-n-not at all," stuttered Herb.

"I g-g-guess I know what it is," laughed Bob. "We've got buck fever."

"W-what's b-buck fever?" queried Herb.

"T-t-the feeling that comes over one when they're expecting to have their first shot at a deer," explained Bob. "T-t-they say that almost everybody has it. B-but now let's shut up talking and get a grip on ourselves. We'll need steady nerves, if we expect to bring down a deer."

At that moment two reports rang out through the woods.

"There they go!" cried Bob, all agog with excitement. "They've started the deer!"

"Perhaps they've brought it down," suggested Herb.

"That may be too," agreed Bob. "If they have, there'll be none that will congratulate them more than we will, eh, old scout? But the chances are against it, and the deer's probably coming like an express train."

"In our direction, let us hope," muttered Herb. "It would be a joke on us if he should turn off to right or left and never let us get sight of him."

The boys gripped their rifles tightly. Now their teeth were chattering more wildly than ever.

A little way in front of them was a thick line of brushwood. Their chief fear was that when that was reached the deer might swerve aside instead of trying to overleap it. Even at that, however, he would be in pretty close range and their chances of a shot would be good.

At a distance they thought that they could hear some large creature crushing through the leafless thickets. In a few moments that belief became a certainty.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and the boys strained their eyes to catch the first glimpse of their quarry.

Then Bob became conscious of something that was slipping along the other side of the hedge. It seemed like a gray shadow and he wondered whether his eyes were not deceiving him.

No, it was no shadow. It was something of bulk and length, though he could not identify it with certainty. It was making practically no noise, but the snow accounted for that.

He ran his eye along the barrel of the rifle and fired.

A great body reared itself into the air, rolled

over and over, and, after a few convulsive movements, lay still.

At the instant Bob fired, Herb caught a glimpse of the graceful, leaping body of a buck as it plunged from the brushwood across a little space and into a denser patch beyond.

Herb raised his rifle and fired. But he was too much in a hurry. The shot went wild.

With a frightened upflinging of antlered head the buck disappeared among the trees.

"You scared him off just too soon, Bob," groaned Herb. "Another moment and he'd have been almost on top of us. Coming right toward us, too."

"Sorry," said Bob. "But I shouldn't wonder if what I killed was more important than a deer, Herb. Come and look."

There was a quality in Bob's tone that brought Herb running. Bob was bending over something stark and gray that lay on the opposite side of the hedge.

"Great Scott!" cried Herb, "it's a wolf, Bob."

"A wolf it is," agreed Bob. "A big one, too, and half starved by the look of it."

Herb bent close over the gaunt carcass, studying it thoughtfully.

"Where was he when you fired, Bob?" he asked. "I didn't see him."

"I felt this fellow first before I saw him,"

replied Bob. "Certainly it wasn't any sound that made me turn around and look. Then I saw a shadow, a slinky sort of shadow, sneaking along close to the ground. I fired—and here you have him."

"A few minutes more and he might have had us," remarked Herb, with a grin.

"Not impossible," agreed Bob. "Anyway, we got him first, which is the main thing."

"We'll have no venison to offer Slim when we get back to camp," Herb ruminated, "but we might offer him a little wolf instead. I wonder if wolf is good to eat."

"None for me, thanks," laughed Bob. "I'd feel as though I were eating dog. Although," he added thoughtfully, "I suppose many a half-starved hunter has found wolf meat better than nothing."

"All depends on how hungry you are," Herb agreed. "Say, Bob," as he stirred the carcass with the tip of his boot, "you did pretty well bringing him down with the first shot."

Bob shrugged, modestly disclaiming credit.

"It would have been a disgrace to have missed at such short range," he said. "The beast was almost on top of us."

Herb looked at his friend oddly.

"I wonder—" he began and stopped.

"Wonder what?" Bob prompted.

"Well, the old boy might have been following us, mightn't he?"

Bob considered.

"I don't believe they usually hunt except in packs," he said. "Still, you never can tell. This particular wolf looks as if a good meal would have been a comfort to him."

At this point, Jimmy and Joe came hurrying up to them, eager to know whether they had bagged the deer. When they saw the carcass of the wolf the story had to be related for their benefit. While they were sorry that the deer hunt had failed, they were relieved that nothing serious had happened to their chums.

They were vaguely excited, too, at sight of the wolf.

"Probably it was one of those you took a shot at that night in the cabin, Bob," Jimmy suggested.

"Mr. Corning will be interested too," Herb added, "to find that wolves actually have crossed the Canadian border."

"What do you mean 'wolves,'" protested Bob. "We've seen only one so far."

"Where there's one," Herb said soberly, "there's mighty likely to be others."

It was only after it was uttered that the full force of this observation struck the boys.

"That's so," agreed Jimmy. "Wolves hunt

in packs. This one may have been an advance guard—a sort of scout as it were."

Bob glanced about him. For the first time he noticed that the afternoon was wearing on. It would soon be dusk.

"Well, fellows," he said, as he threw his rifle over his shoulder, "I reckon we'd better be starting back to camp."

There was a chorus of protests.

"We've got lots of time yet," Herb said. "We're not far from camp, anyway."

"Thought maybe we could scare up another deer," put in Joe. "Seems a pity to go back empty-handed."

But Bob shook his head.

"It's getting late," he said, "and our search might lead us so far that we wouldn't be able to get back to camp before dark."

"And there's always the danger of meeting this fellow's pals," said Herb, as he touched the carcass. "Bob's right, fellows. There'll be other days for hunting. We'll bring down our deer yet."

Another brief conference followed as to what they should do with the dead wolf. It was finally decided, somewhat reluctantly, to leave the beast where it had fallen.

"It will feed some of its hungry brethren, anyway," stated Jimmy lightly.

"Probably the only time it will have done anything useful," added Herb.

The boys began their journey toward the camp, but they had not gone far before Joe said suddenly:

"I believe it's snowing again, fellows. We'd better hurry along, or the trail back will be wiped out."

"Not so good," observed Herb. "There are lots of things I'd rather do than spend the night out here in the open."

"Me too," put in Jimmy more fervently than grammatically. "Besides, I'm getting hungry for a smell of Jensen's baked beans."

"I want more than a smell, myself," affirmed Herb.

For some time Joe had been noticing with growing uneasiness that the trail was gradually becoming obliterated. The new fall of snow was soft and insidious, a gently drifting white blanket that altered the face of the landscape almost before one became conscious of change.

For some time now, Joe, in the lead, had been breaking a new trail for himself and his chums. His straining eyes had clung to the last faint impressions of the old trail. Now there was no longer anything to cling to.

"Say, listen, don't tell me we're lost!" cried Jimmy, alarmed as the vision of Jensen's baked

beans began to fade. "Gee, I'm starved!"

"And it's getting colder by the minute," remarked Joe, his teeth chattering.

"And no place to go," added Herb. "When we get home we'll have to give a radio talk on how it feels to be lost in the woods in winter."

"You might better say 'if we get home,'" groaned Jimmy, whose spirits continued to sink in exact proportion as the prospects of supper receded. "Just now it seems more likely that we'll leave our bones to bleach in this white wilderness."

"In that case, some one else will be giving the radio talk," laughed Bob. "Maybe the fellow, whoever he is, will tell pathetically about coming across these same bleached bones——"

"You give me the shivers," protested Jimmy. "Let's move on."

"The first thing to do is to get to the very top of the hill," suggested Joe. "We know that if we keep going east long enough we're bound to get to the camp in the end."

"Yes, but with the sun gone down how are we going to tell which is east, west, north or south," complained Herb.

"There's something in that," Bob admitted. "It'll be not much more than guess work."

"Well, if we keep on walking long enough

we'll hit something," Herb summed the matter up.

The suggestion did not seem particularly brilliant, but they accepted it in lieu of anything better and pressed forward, hoping for luck.

But luck seemed to have deserted them. A long time of floundering through the deep snow brought them apparently no nearer the Corning camp. It brought them only nearer to the night and the dangers of that creeping blackness.

It was bitter cold. A wind coming from the north swept bleakly through the woods. It played a mournful tune in the high branches of the trees, a long wailing note that reminded the boys of—what?

They asked the question of each other uneasily.

"Sounds sort of like wolves, doesn't it?" Jimmy suggested.

At his question there rose before the eyes of the tired boys the vision of a dark, gray shape stretched gaunt and lifeless in the drifted snow.

Wolves!

CHAPTER XIV

SLINKING SHAPES

THE Radio Boys looked about them fearfully. Something Herb Fennington had said came back to them: "Where there is one wolf there are probably more."

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"No use talking and thinking about wolves just now," he stated. "Of course, we can imagine all sorts of things if we try. The thing to do now is to keep going."

They were chilled to the bone. There was no longer any feeling in their feet. They simply put one before the other automatically, knowing that to stop moving in that zero weather was to invite death. Their breath froze and clung to their faces in little particles of ice. The thought of food, warmth, comfort filled them with a longing that was intolerable.

Then Joe saw it!

A slinking shape that kept within the shelter

of the trees and regarded the boys with ravenous eyes!

At first he mistrusted his senses. They had been talking, thinking wolf, and in the lad's estimation it was only a step further on to seeing wolf.

"Imagination," he muttered to himself and brushed a hand across his eyes.

At last Herb noticed that Joe glanced frequently over his shoulder.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked, his breath whistling through half-frozen lips. "Seeing things?"

"I hope not," replied Joe. He spoke in an odd tone, and Herb demanded an explanation. He pressed close to Joe's side and said in a low voice:

"Something's wrong, Joe. What is it?"

For answer Joe dropped a little farther back and pointed with an unsteady hand.

"Look over there," he said. "Do you see anything?"

Herb stared steadily, frowningly, concentrating his gaze. Then he gave a start.

"It's—Say, Joe, is it a wolf?"

Joe nodded.

"It's been stalking us for some time. Must be desperately hungry to do that. Unless——"

"Unless what?" demanded Herb excitedly.

"Unless there's a pack of them not far off," replied Joe slowly. "A wolf is cautious unless he's hunting in a pack. Especially where man is concerned."

"This gets better and better—I don't think," declared Herb, his fascinated eyes on the spot where the shadows had swallowed up for the moment another shadow. "If there's a pack and it surrounds us——"

"We're goners," Joe admitted. "Our one chance is to reach shelter of some kind before they become too bold."

"We have our guns," observed Herb. "If I see that fellow again, I've a mind to take a shot at him."

But they did not see the wolf again just then, and a shout from Bob and Jimmy, who were struggling on ahead, brought them running to see what had happened.

Their relief was great when they saw looming behind the two lads a bulky shadow that could mean but one thing. In their extremity they had stumbled upon shelter!

"Don't know what kind of a shebang it is," remarked Bob, "but it's a shack of some sort."

"Dumb luck but good luck!" cried Herb, and began feeling about the building for a door.

They found at first only a doorway. The

door had rusted away from its hinges and lay inside on the floor of the cabin.

However, the boys were in no mood to be critical and pressed through the doorway thankfully.

"We can huddle together for warmth and at least keep from freezing," observed Bob.

"Freezing—or worse," muttered Herb. He was thinking, as was Joe, of that slinking, menacing shape somewhere out there among the shadows.

They had no light except what might be afforded by a few matches. These they soon burnt out in an effort to get an idea of their surroundings. But before the last flickering flame went out they had noted all that they really needed to see.

The cabin was a barren place. A table and three broken chairs constituted the furnishings with the exception of a stove for which there was no fuel in sight. The place had evidently been deserted for a long time. It was literally on its last legs. The walls sagged and showed jagged seams where the logs had separated. There had been a window once, but this was boarded up. Part of the roof had fallen in, showing a yawning hole.

"Not much to keep off the wintry breezes," commented Herb.

"But a lot better than nothing," Bob declared. "At least, it's partly enclosed."

"The first thing to do is to get that door adjusted," said Joe uneasily.

"The hinges are rusted—" began Jimmy.

"We don't need hinges," Joe interrupted impatiently. "We'll pile the table and chairs and the stove, if need be, against the door. Anything to keep it closed."

There was an edge to his voice that stirred Bob's curiosity.

"You're in an all-fired hurry about that door, Joe," he remarked. "What's the matter? Afraid we'll have company?"

"A pretty unpleasant kind of company," replied Joe, and went on to tell of what Herb and he had seen as they floundered toward that dubious shelter.

"If that wolf was alone," he finished, "we'll be as safe here as in the Corning camp. Lend me a hand here with this door, will you, fellows? But if there's a pack of them——"

"Then you think they may crash the gate?" said Bob thoughtfully. "Well, that would make it interesting."

"Very," retorted Herb ironically. "As long as our ammunition lasted—What's that?"

"That" was a long wild howl somewhere off in the woods—the howl of a wolf.

While the boys listened, the cry was answered by another and still another. In a moment the woods were hideous with the sound, the hunger howl of the wolf that has scented its prey.

When the clamor died it had the effect of burying the cabin fathoms deep in a terrible, creeping stillness. The boys felt oppressed, smothered by it.

Bob began to feel his way about the hut.

"I set my gun up against the wall," he said, groping. "Here it is!"

"Sure that door is secure?" asked Jimmy anxiously. "Let's try it and make sure."

They tugged at it and found that their barricade was as strong as they could make it with the materials at hand.

"That hole in the roof!" exclaimed Herb. "We should have choked that up some way."

"Nothing to choke it up with," said Bob briefly. "If any varmint starts to jump down on us from up there we can pot it right enough."

"As long as our ammunition lasts, yes," returned Herb. "But after that—what then?"

"For the love of Pete, stop asking questions!" cried Jimmy querulously. "Haven't we got enough trouble? Say, I wish I could find one of those holes in the wall for my gun."

"Shouldn't think you could go amiss of them,"

replied Herb. "There are more holes than walls."

"Come over here, fellows."

Bob's voice, quiet as it was, brought the others to him quickly. He had found one of the rents in the wall. In the aperture he rested his gun. His finger rested lightly on the trigger.

"Can you see what I see?" he asked them softly.

"A wolf," replied Jimmy.

"Two wolves," corrected Herb.

"Three—four!" added Joe Atwood excitedly. "There's a pack of them, all right."

"Not a very large pack, though," said Bob. He was surprised to find that he could speak so calmly. "There probably aren't many that find their way over the Canadian border."

"They're spreading out!" exclaimed Herb.

The slinking shapes were only blurs of shadow against the deeper shadow back of them. If it had been quite dark outside, the boys would not have been able to see them. As it was, they could distinguish the movements of their foes sufficiently to note their strategy.

"Better each find a gunhole," suggested Bob.

"Yes," muttered Joe. "Something tells me that we'll need them."

CHAPTER XV

THE WOLVES ATTACK

"Don't waste any ammunition," warned Bob Layton. "Wait till they get bold and come up close to the cabin. We must make every bullet tell. We haven't one too many."

The boys were keyed for an immediate attack. But this did not come. Famished as the wolves were and made ferocious by the proximity of their prey, the animals still retained their native caution.

Their instinct told them that their quarry was trapped. But they knew also that the boys were probably armed, and they had learned to be wary of man and the strange, stinging instrument of pain and death that usually accompanied him.

So hours of suspense and apprehension dragged on. At intervals the terrifying wolf cry broke the stillness, and each time the boys found that the ring of sharp-fanged death had crept a little closer.

It was fearfully cold. Now and then the boys

left their posts and huddled together for warmth and then returned to the loopholes.

The suspense became unbearable.

"Let's rush them," broke out Joe savagely. "Nothing could be worse than this."

Bob grabbed his gun.

"We don't have to rush them!" he cried. "They're rushing us! Here they come!"

A number of dark shapes had detached themselves from the woods and darted into the clearing.

"I'll cover the door and the front of the hut," said Bob, trying to keep his voice as steady as possible. "Each of you fellows take one of the other three sides."

"Who is going to take the roof?" asked Herb.

"We'll all have to keep an eye on that," returned Bob. "To your posts now. Quick!"

The wolves, according to their custom, had slowed their first rush and wheeled to circle the cabin. Though lacking the thinking power of the boys, so unhappily held at bay, they were crafty in their cunning, and instinct told them to find out on which side their prey was weakest.

Jimmy's gun cracked, followed almost instantly by the report of Herb's.

Joe, thinking to lend support to the side attacked, started from his post. Spinning on his right foot with the intention of leaping across

the room, he caught his foot behind the table leg and crashed heavily to the floor. In doing so he pulled the table with him, and a crack showed in the doorway.

"I think I got one," cried Jimmy excitedly. "Wounded him anyway."

"Quick, Joe!" cried Bob. "Help me with this door. Are you hurt?"

"No," replied Joe, seizing the table to put it back in place. "But my box of cartridges was on this table, and now it's gone. I'm afraid it's fallen through this rotten old floor."

"But you've still got some left even if the box has gone, haven't you?" asked Bob anxiously.

"A dozen or so perhaps in my pockets," replied Joe. "Some of you fellows will have to help me out if I run short. But the first thing is to get this door barricaded."

Together they got the table back and then returned to their loopholes. Jimmy and Herb thus far were the only ones that had caught sight of the foe, and they kept firing away at them whenever they offered a target.

But the targets were so vague that they could not tell certainly what damage they had done. Most of their bullets had probably gone astray.

The constant reports and the numerous flashes of flame spitting at them had served to daunt their enemies somewhat and had driven them

farther away. But they were still there, resolute, watching, and biding their time.

The brief truce enabled the boys to get together and divide their store of cartridges evenly. Their hearts sank as they did so, for the net result was not more than half a dozen apiece.

"No firing now until we're pretty sure to hit," directed Bob. "If our guns once get empty, heaven help us."

At the door, open at the bottom by some inches because of its warping, there came a sniffing followed by the scratching of claws. Then two green eyes glared through.

Bob fired at those eyes instantly and was rewarded with a howl of pain. Gnashing teeth and furious snarls told that the wounded wolf was defending itself from the onset of its mates.

There came a crash against the barred window. It was the body of a wolf more desperate than the rest, a wolf determined to get through, and it was a crash sufficiently hard to loosen the lower fastenings of the shutters barring the window.

Joe had jumped to it and the butt of his rifle fell heavily on a paw that was thrust through.

The creature fell back with a howl.

"Saved a bullet that time," remarked Joe; "and I guess that particular wolf won't do much more business to-night."

"Good idea," congratulated Bob. "Give them the butt when you can and the muzzle when you must."

Now there was no respite from the attack. On every side the maddened creatures were tearing at the boards, at the door, at the window.

One of the boards at the end opposite the door was pulled away and through the opening a huge body squeezed. It had got half way through when a bullet from Herb's rifle penetrated to the brain. The creature struggled for a moment and then lay still, its body blocking the aperture.

But husband their ammunition as they might, it was rapidly diminishing and the boys' hearts sank with it. They knew now that they had underestimated the number of their foes.

Then came a scrambling, scratching sound above them. They scarcely needed the footfalls on the roof to tell them where the most imminent danger lay.

The wolves, thwarted on the level, had changed their strategy and were seeking a new point of vantage.

As the boys gazed upward, the yawning jaws of a wolf appeared at the roof opening, plainly seen against the half-light of the sky.

Bob fired instantly. Joe shot at almost the same instant. The target was close and both

bullets struck. The wolf fell back and they could hear his body sliding from the roof, to be pounced on immediately by its comrades.

Scarcely had it disappeared when another head showed at the opening. Joe shot and wounded the wolf, but it dropped nevertheless with a thud to the floor. It snarled defiance and leaped at Joe.

But Bob, who did not dare to shoot for fear of hitting his chum, clubbed his rifle and swung it with all his might. It caught the beast in mid-air and it dropped like a log. It struggled to get up, but a bullet from Herb's rifle finished its career.

"How many cartridges have you left, Joe?" asked Bob, as they leaned panting against the wall.

"One," answered Joe.

"Same here," added Jimmy.

"I finished that wolf with my last one," said Herb. "Looks as though our goose were cooked."

CHAPTER XVI

FRIENDS IN NEED

"Not by a jugful!" declared Bob Layton with a confidence that he was far from feeling, in answer to Herb's bitter remark. "I've got two bullets left. And when the bullets are gone we'll give them the butts. You see how mine brought that last fellow down."

With eyes glued on that yawning hole in the roof, the boys waited. Waited for the enemy. Waited also for death! For in the heart of each hope had almost given place to despair.

Just then came a sound that made their nerves tingle and sent the blood coursing through their veins—the report of a rifle!

They listened breathlessly. Had they imagined it? Were they the victims of their overwrought nerves?

No. There came the sound of a second shot—this time nearer. Help was at hand!

Even in the rush of thankfulness and jubilation the Radio Boys were conscious of something

else. There was no more scrambling on the roof, no more green eyes glinted at them through the darkness.

Jimmy, who had been peering through a loophole in the direction of the sounds, gave a whoop.

"Here they come, fellows!" he shouted. "Men with guns!"

As he spoke there was another sharp report, and the boys saw a lank shadow leap into the air, fall down again, tearing at a wound, and then lie still.

"Got him good and plenty!" jubilated Bob. "When you think that just a minute ago we were expecting that fellow to drop on our heads——"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment a heavy knocking sounded on the door.

"Are you there, boys?" called a voice that they knew.

"Dad!" cried Jimmy, and began to tug at the table and other things that barricaded the crazy door.

They yanked until they had the entrance free and then across the opening rushed Mr. Plummer and Mr. Corning, followed closely by Slim Jones and Sandy MacGregor.

There was a wild few minutes of excitement and incoherence when everybody hugged everybody else and questions and answers flew thick and fast.

Mr. Plummer's voice broke as he tried to tell the boys of the search, and it was Mr. Corning who took up the tale.

"When the sun went down and you had not returned we were worried, and the falling snow didn't make us feel any better," he said. "We set out at once to find you. The men made up several other parties to search the woods thoroughly. You see, you boys have made yourselves pretty popular during your stay here," he added, with a smile.

"But this shack is miles off the road to camp," put in Slim. "Wonder is to me how you boys happened to find it."

"Just stumbled on it," explained Bob, and went on to give the details of their adventures up to the time the searching men had reached the cabin. The rescuers went pale as they heard of the boys' stark battle with their enemies.

"Wolves are bad medicine!" exclaimed Sandy. "They must have been starved nearly to death to come foraging over the border."

"Mighty lucky you boys happened to find some sort of a shelter!" ejaculated Mr. Corning.

" 'Some sort' is right," said Bob. "What with the door and the roof fallen in, there wasn't much left to shelter us."

"I'm mighty grateful to it, though," put in Joe. "We probably owe our lives to it."

"I'd like to know just how many of the fellows we got," said Jimmy.

"Well, there are two in here, I see," replied Slim, sending the gleams of his flashlight about, "and we stumbled over a couple outside. Maybe there are other carcasses around that we didn't see."

"We let fly at a beastie on the roof and brought him down, and we winged one that was sneakin' away in the dark," remarked Sandy. "Altogether it's been rather a bad night for wolves."

Now that the strain was over the one desire of the boys was to get back to camp as soon as possible. They had been cold to the marrow and were tremendously hungry. The mess-house with a ministering Jensen appearing with a steaming platter of beans was what they wanted more than anything else on earth.

"We'll be getting back," said Mr. Corning. "These lads need rest and warmth and food if ever lads did. Come on! All hands get stirring."

Before they started off the boys circled the cabin just once. They found the two carcasses mentioned by Slim. That is, they found the hides and not much else. And they found one more that he had overlooked.

"A verra good bag for one nicht, I'd ca' it," said Sandy.

They bade the shack farewell, glad to be rid of all the nightmare happenings with which it was connected. Slim Jones led them back to the camp as straight as the arrow flies, but they had been far afield, the newfallen snow was hard to plod through, and it was a long time before they reached the logging settlement.

There they were received with an enthusiasm that warmed their hearts, and Jensen outdid himself in the meal he spread for them, grinning widely as he saw it vanish.

The other parties came tramping in, learning from gun shots that had been discharged at intervals that the wanderers had been found, and what promised to be a scene of mourning became a highly festal occasion.

Much of the following day the boys slept heavily, but when evening came they were as gay and lively as usual. Their youth and vitality had met all the demands made on them—demands that might well have floored any who were not in the very pink of condition.

Their shack was crowded that night by the lumberjacks, intent on more details than they had been able to gather that morning. So many were there that some had to climb into the bunks to make room for others. Wolves were infrequent enough about the Corning camp to make their coming an event, and the story was told

again and again from every conceivable angle.

"Wouldn't a' minded bein' in on that myself," said one of the visitors. "I always wanted to see a wolf in action, but never seed one yet, 'less it was in a trap."

"Why didn't you bring one of 'em along with you?" asked another, grinning.

"We would have," laughed Herb, "only we were afraid he might get a little peevish and bite one of you fellows."

After a while Bob turned on the radio, tuning in to one of the nearer stations that offered an hour of really good music.

Perhaps the music was too good for some of the lumberjacks, those whom the radio had not yet educated up to the point of appreciating the beauties of Bach and Beethoven.

At any rate, they fidgeted and at last Reddy Payne made a suggestion.

"What do you say we pep 'er up a bit?" he said. "This here sinkercopation would strike me pretty hard jest now."

"Reddy, he wants to show off his dancin'," drawled Slim. "Figgers he's the bes' dancer in this part of the country, don't you, Reddy?"

"Sure thing!" returned Reddy, unabashed. "Any galoot what thinks he can beat me, jest let him step to the front, that's all I ask."

Reddy was instantly challenged by two of the

men, Crab Huxly and Shorty Miller. The three contestants were pushed to the front by their laughing comrades and a space was cleared for them.

Bob tuned in to Station WAEI, from which a medley of old jig tunes was being broadcast. At the first note the men yelled, jumped into the air, cracked their heels together and were off to a flying start.

The audience clapped and cheered them on, and the Radio Boys increased the volume of the set to drown the clamor.

The program was a long one, but so was the endurance of the performers. They jigged and jumped and did the heel and toe, while their faces became puffed and red and their breath came in gasps.

They had such a rollicking time that it was nearly midnight before the lumberjacks deserted the cabin and made their way across the snow-packed clearing to their own quarters.

The Radio Boys climbed into their bunks, and all fell asleep immediately.

Sunday passed quietly, and on Monday Mr. Plummer left the camp for home.

"Didn't find out anything about that Jason Pelton, did you?" Jimmy asked before he said good-by.

"Not much," replied Mr. Plummer. "I think

he's hanging out in this district, but where, I don't know. Some lumberjacks saw him about a week ago. Too bad! I need that two thousand," and the carpenter sighed deeply.

"Gee, Dad, wish I could help you!" returned Jimmy earnestly.

The next day the boys went out gunning and managed to bag two partridges and five rabbits. They also saw a fox, but the beast got away from them.

Tired out, the four chums retired early and were soon sound asleep. They had been sleeping for over an hour when Bob suddenly woke up. He started and his nerves grew tense. Something was moving outside the cabin. A shadow flitted across the window; then another.

Bob threw off his blanket. One hand reached quickly for his gun.

He pulled on his trousers and boots hastily and slipped on a heavy leather jacket. While thus engaged he saw that he had aroused his mates and that they were following his example.

"Something's rotten in Denmark," he whispered to Herb, who happened to be nearest to him. "Couple of fellows sneaking around the camp at this time of night don't mean good to any one. Thought I'd better take a look."

"We're with you," came the voice of Joe from the darkness. "Let's go."

The boys let themselves silently from the cabin and were in time to see a couple of burly figures disappearing about the further side of the storehouse.

"Looks like dirty work," whispered Jimmy.

Bob grunted a reply and led the way swiftly and silently toward the spot where the figures had vanished.

The Radio Boys reached the building and peered cautiously around its corner. Nothing there.

Then Herb gripped Bob's arm.

"Some one in the storehouse," he whispered. "Look!"

CHAPTER XVII

CROOKED BUSINESS

THERE was a window on the east side of the storehouse. To reach the window the Radio Boys would have to pass the door, which was slightly open, and risk the chance of discovery by whoever lurked inside. That chance they must take, however, if they hoped to solve the mystery.

Like ghosts they slipped over the snow, hugging the wall. When they had nearly reached the door, Bob paused and pointed to something that stood out against the snow.

With a quickening of excitement the boys recognized the object as a dog sled. It had been drawn to the edge of the clearing and left there to await developments.

Of one thing the boys were fairly certain. That sled did not belong to the camp. It was only a step from that to the surmise that strangers were prowling about.

"Looks bad," whispered Bob.

"They're up to no good, you can be sure of that," returned Joe in the same low tone. "But let's get past that door before we're seen."

This they accomplished one by one, their task rendered the easier by the absorption of the intruders in their task.

They hurried around the corner and peered cautiously through the window. What they saw caused them instantly to grow rigid.

There were five men within the room. Two were strangers. The other three the boys knew only too well. One was Wilson and his companions were two of the surly men from over the border.

"Now we know there's dirty work on hand," murmured Herb. "What do you suppose they're up to?"

The men within the storehouse answered this question almost at once. Wilson and his two fellow workmen began handing down packages of canned stuffs from the well-stocked shelves of the storehouse. These the strangers hastily shoved into great bags that they had brought along for that purpose.

The plot was instantly clear to the boys. The strangers were stealing precious provisions from the camp—precious beyond measure at that time of year because of the difficulty of providing fresh supplies. And Wilson and his cronies, sup-

posedly loyal to Mr. Corning and his interests, were aiding and abetting the theft!

"The low-down crooks!" muttered Bob to himself, clenching his fists. "I wonder if they think for a minute that they can get away with that sort of thing!"

Joe's hair-trigger temper took fire.

"Come on!" he exclaimed, starting toward the door of the building. "Let's clean out the whole bunch!"

But Bob, cooler-headed, interposed.

"Hold your horses," he counseled, dragging Joe back into the shadow cast by the wall. "They are five to four and in a contest are likely to win. Then how about Mr. Corning's goods?"

"You're right, Bob," agreed Herb. "Seems to me it's our first duty to warn Mr. Corning. After that we can mix it with these rascals if it comes to a scrap."

The boys ducked under the window and hurried over the snow to the cabin that Mr. Corning had made his headquarters. They rapped on the door until it was opened by the proprietor himself.

"There are thieves in the storehouse," declared Bob abruptly.

"They've a sled to carry things off in," panted Jimmy.

"Come in," directed the lumberman briskly.

"You can talk while I get into my clothes."

The boys narrated hurriedly what they had seen, and as he listened, their host's face grew menacingly grim.

"Stealing provisions out here in the north country is almost as bad as murder," he said, as he shrugged into his leather coat and reached for his gun. "In fact, it may prove to be actual murder, in case the snow prevents us from getting fresh supplies. All right now, come along."

They hastened over to the storehouse, the boys eager to come to grips with the thieving strangers and the treacherous employees.

Just as they were nearing the building, the light suddenly went out.

They broke into a jog trot, but they were just too late. As they turned the corner of the storehouse they saw three figures scuttle across the snow into the shelter of the woods. A moment later came the slithering sound of sled runners over the snow. The thieves had made their escape!

Muttering through his clenched teeth, Mr. Corning rushed to the door of the building. Rifle to shoulder he called out in an authoritative voice:

"If there's any one in there, come out."

There was no response. Though they listened intently, no sound broke the black stillness within.

They entered, and Mr. Corning struck a light. The oil lantern hung in its accustomed place on the wall. The lumberman put a match to the wick and, as the light flared up, looked about him.

Jimmy gave an exclamation and pointed to a couple of loaded sacks lying on the floor.

"The thieves must have left in a hurry!" he cried. "They didn't have time to take their loot."

Each sack proved to be crammed with dry and canned stuff from the storehouse shelves. Mr. Corning's eyes flashed.

"You boys arrived in the nick of time," he said. "The Corning camp owes you another debt of gratitude. From now on," he added, grimly, "we'll have a guard stationed at the storehouse door."

"The strangers have got away," observed Bob, "and I suppose it's no use chasing them in the dark. Wilson, though, and his pals are probably in their shacks, pretending to be asleep."

"Likely enough," agreed Mr. Corning. "And we'll let them keep on pretending—for the present at least."

The boys were disgruntled. They felt that the rascals ought to have swift punishment meted out to them, and they were surprised that Mr. Corning expressed no intention of seeing that they got their deserts.

"We'll lock up here and set a guard and then I'll tell you what my reasons are," said the lumberman, who had rightly interpreted the expression on the face of each boy.

When this was done and they had returned to Mr. Corning's cabin, the latter explained.

"If the theft had been more than an attempt, if it had succeeded," he said, as he settled himself comfortably in a chair, "I'd have had to take the matter up and sift it to the bottom. As it is, the rascals have had a good scare and a needed lesson. There probably won't be any second attempt."

"But how about Wilson and his pals?" asked Joe. "Are you going to let them get away with it?"

Mr. Corning frowned.

"As to those three," he said, "I'd like to fire them to-morrow. It may come to that in the end, anyway. But, as I've said before, we're short-handed now. We need the men, and in a camp like this where you're apt to be shut up all winter with the same crowd it's just as well to keep on as good terms with that crowd as possible. Then, too—" he broke off and regarded the boys speculatively—"I have you boys to consider."

"What about us?" asked Herb, in genuine surprise.

Mr. Corning smiled.

"Well, it seems to me," he said quizzically, "that Wilson and his special cronies are not on any too good terms with you boys."

"You bet they're not!" put in Jimmy. "They seem to regard us as responsible for all that goes wrong with them, whether we've had anything to do with it or not."

"That's one reason why I'm not over anxious to bring this charge against them to-night," returned their host. "I'd have to name you boys as witnesses and—well, those Canadian lumberjacks are pretty bad medicine when they get their dander up."

"Don't worry about that," remarked Bob. "We can probably take all they have to give and then some."

"Oh, I know you've plenty of courage," replied Mr. Corning. "But I don't want you to have any trouble if it can possibly be avoided. Of course," he added, that grim expression again coming into his face, "if there's any second attempt—well, that will be a very different story."

There the matter was left and the boys plodded back to their shack.

"Doesn't seem right to let those fellows get off without even a call down," grumbled Jimmy.

"Ten to one they'll blame us anyway for putting a crimp in their plans," added Herb. He

flung his boots into a corner and rolled himself in his blankets with a grunt of weariness. "We'll get the name without enjoying any of the game."

"Just the same, I think Mr. Corning's right," remarked Bob. "He's short-handed, and the loss of two or three men at this time of year would make a difference to him. If this night's work throws a scare into Wilson and his friends, the boss may get a good season's work out of them after all."

For days after the incident of the storehouse all was quiet in the Corning camp. Rafe Wilson and the small group of surly Canadians that constituted his gang went about their work competently and made no protest at the long hours and hard work that were the lot of all the men in the camp.

The days of the Radio Boys were spent in the frozen spaces of the snowbound woods; their evenings in tinkering with their sets and tuning in on attractive programs from various stations, of which the enthusiastic lumberjacks never seemed to tire.

They were bobsledding one day on a small hill not far from camp, when Sandy MacGregor and Slim Jones, who were passing, stopped for a moment to watch the sport.

"Not such a bad slide at that," remarked

Sandy, "but I'm not sayin' I mightn't find you a better one."

"The old log slide, eh, Sandy?" put in Slim. "That would give these young roosters thrills enough even for them."

"A log slide," repeated Bob. "That sounds rather good to me."

"Wait till you see it," responded Sandy.

He led the way to an abandoned slide that was steep enough to satisfy the demands of the most adventurous spirits.

For nearly three hundred yards it dipped downward at a perilous angle and then turned sharply to the left on a path that led to the river.

"When you get down near the foot of the incline you want to swerve quickly so as not to get on to the river," warned Sandy.

"I guess the river is frozen hard enough though, isn't it?" asked Bob, his eyes gleaming as he took in the steepness of the slide.

"None too solid," said Slim, shaking his head. "It's too deep to freeze solid even in the coldest weather, and we've been having a pretty moderate spell for the last few days."

"We'll be careful," promised Joe impatiently. "Say, but that looks like one beautiful slide to me. Come on, fellows. Let's go."

They piled on tumultuously, Bob at the steering gear.

The delirious wild thrill of that downward plunge! The ground fell away from beneath them as they catapulted forward into space.

Bob steered coolly and skillfully, but the descent was so swift that it took all his strength to prevent a plunge over the steep side of the run.

He averted this danger, however, and they flew at a furious pace down the long incline.

"Now I know how a log feels on its way to the river," Herb laughed.

"That's natural," commented Jimmy. "You're both wooden."

Herb's snappy retort to this insult was whipped away by the wind and did not reach Jimmy's ears.

Now they were coming near the end. The rapid motion sent the blood singing through them. They felt buoyed up, intoxicated by the rush. The whine of the runners over the crisp snow was music to their ears.

Then came a yell from Joe.

"Look out, Bob! The river! The river! Turn off!"

CHAPTER XVIII

A FRIGHTFUL MOMENT

THE Radio Boys were rushing toward the foot of the slide, were almost upon the river.

Bob saw that the ice covering the stream was seamed with cracks. Here and there showed a dark splotch of open water.

The bob had achieved a terrific pace. The runners scarcely touched the snow. Friction had become a thing of the past. If they had been flying through space, the boys could hardly have felt more divorced from contact with the earth.

It seemed that nothing could save them. A few yards more and they would be fairly upon the treacherous ice. It would give way beneath the impact of the heavily loaded sled, the icy waters would close over them, sucking them down.

But Bob Layton was not beaten yet. He set his teeth and put all the strength of his body in one tremendous effort.

The steering gear creaked ominously, the sled quivered as though about to be torn asunder, but it swerved away from the menace of the open water, swerved just in the nick of time. It skidded along, one runner completely off the ground, seemed about to turn turtle, then plunged headlong into a drift.

So great was the momentum that the sled ploughed its full length into the heaped-up snow before it could be stopped. Bob and Herb were swept off by the impact. They rolled over and over, floundering helplessly.

But Joe and Jimmy went with the sled. When Bob and Herb found their feet and rubbed the snow from their eyes they saw only the drift with a hole in it. Their comrades had disappeared.

The buried boys were rescued without much difficulty. They were dragged to the light, blinking and bewildered.

"You look like a couple of Santa Clauses out of season," chuckled Herb. "All you need are sets of whiskers to make the illusion complete."

"You look pretty much the same yourself," grumbled Jimmy, with a glance at Herb's snow-covered clothes. "Folks that live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

"If Bob hadn't been able to turn the sled off its course, we'd be down with the fishes just

now," observed Joe. "Gee, just the thought of that water gives me the creeps!"

"Some slide!" said Bob, looking up at the way they had come. "That sure gave me the thrill of my life. "Who's game to do it over again?"

By unanimous vote they signified that they were not only ready but eager to repeat.

"Only this time we'll start our turn a little earlier," Bob stated.

It was a glorious afternoon that the boys never forgot. The long tedious pull uphill was more than compensated for by the breath-taking dip down the slide. Again and again they repeated the performance.

The twilight was almost at an end as the boys reached the outskirts of the camp, dragging the heavy bob behind them. Shadows of coming night lay heavily upon the clearing. The woods themselves were fully dark.

As they were about to emerge from the fringe of trees that bordered the open space the boys became aware of voices. They were cautiously lowered voices, the owners hidden from the boys by an unusually thick clump of trees.

Instantly they recognized one of the voices as belonging to Rafe Wilson.

"It's time we showed those kids their place," came the gruff tones of the latter. The voice was full of malignity. The Radio Boys had not

realized till that moment the depth of the hatred the fellow had for them.

"Spyin' on us all the time, that's what they're doin'," came from another in a growl. "A good lickin' might teach 'em to leave their betters alone an' mind their own business."

Joe's impulsive temper went off with a bang. "Is that so?" he cried. His voice, crisp and angry, sounded like a rifle shot in that quiet place. "All right, suppose you try to give it to us."

There was a moment of tense silence. Then three heavy-shouldered, powerful figures slouched from behind the shelter of the trees.

"Spyin' again, eh?" came the sneering voice of Rafe Wilson. "Sneakin' up on us to see what you can find out!"

Bob's hands clenched tightly, but he kept his voice steady as he said:

"You've got us all wrong there, Wilson. We just happened to be coming this way and heard what you said."

"Couldn't have helped it, unless we'd had our ears stuffed with cotton," Herb added.

"Oh, of course that's the way you'd try to get out of it," sneered Rafe. "Run along now and tell the boss. That's your big stunt."

"I suppose you're alluding now to the other night," said Bob quietly, "the night you and your

two pals were helping thieves steal grub from the storehouse. Men have been hung for less than that, Rafe Wilson."

With a roar of animal fury, the lumberjack lunged forward. At the same time he swung a right for Bob's jaw that must have felled the lad if it had landed.

But Bob dodged like a cat, and in his turn bored in, swinging a pretty left and right to Wilson's mid-section before his burly opponent could regain his balance.

A grunt of surprise and rage told that the blows stung, and Wilson swung again a blow that might have felled an ox. But Bob danced out of reach, eyes intent on his lumbering adversary.

The boys started forward, but Bob waved them back.

"This seems to be between Rafe and me," he said. "I don't need help yet."

"What you'll be needing inside ten seconds is the undertaker," roared the lumberjack.

Again he surged forward.

CHAPTER XIX

A LUSTY TACKLE

RAFE WILSON'S great fists pounded what might have been Bob, but was only air.

For Bob Layton was as quick as a panther, and side-stepped nimbly, keeping well beyond reach of those terrible, sledgehammer swings.

"If one of them landed, it would be all up with me," he told himself and continued to tantalize his huge adversary.

Now and then he landed a hefty blow himself. It was the rapier against the broadsword.

Bob was beginning to tire. He knew that he could not evade those flailing blows forever. Some time Rafe would land and then——

"Come on and fight, you four-flusher!" yelled Rafe, beside himself with rage. "What do you think you're at—a barn dance?"

A guttural chuckle from Wilson's followers sent the blood pounding to Bob's head in a surge of fury. He forgot caution, plunged forward and caught a terrific blow upon his shoulder that

spun him around and landed him on his back in the snow, some feet from where he had been a moment before.

With a bellow of triumph Wilson rushed toward him.

But, lithe as a cat, Bob was on his feet. There was stinging pain in his shoulder, but his brain was as clear and cold as ice. He was going to beat Rafe Wilson!

He crouched almost double, evading a swing of Wilson's right. Then, hunching his body, he sprang forward, all the power of his body behind him.

It was a beautiful football tackle, one that had seldom failed on the field. It did not fail now.

The lumberman went down, his feet knocked from under him. As he fell, his head struck against a tree and he sprawled full length upon the ground.

Bob stood above him, waiting for him to rise. But the fallen giant did not rise. He lay there, inert, motionless.

The Canadians, Rankin and Bixby, rushed forward, eyeing their leader incredulously. Rafe Wilson floored and his intended victim on his feet with no sign of injury!

They might take steps to avenge their crony, and the boys were watching, ready to pitch in if they did, but at the moment several men of the

camp came running toward them, Mr. Corning at their head.

Rankin and Bixby made as though to sneak off, but the Radio Boys got between them and their only avenue of escape.

"No you don't," declared Joe. "You'll stay right here and face the music."

In a moment a group of lumberjacks had surrounded Bob, staring at his fallen adversary.

"Dog my cats if he ain't gone and knocked him out!" cried Crab Huxly delightedly.

"That's what he's done, for a fact!" exclaimed Shorty Miller. "Rafe Wilson, of all fellers! This lad here's got the makin's of a champion, that's what he has."

"I just tackled him, that's all," Bob began modestly.

"I'll say you tackled him," chuckled Crab. "Made a mighty good job of it, too."

"His head hit the tree when he fell," insisted Bob. "It was that that really knocked him out."

Mr. Corning put an end to the argument by pushing through the crowd to Bob's side. The face of the boss was stern. Those who could see his expression knew that "old Corning" meant business.

"How did this trouble start?" he asked.

The boys explained how they had come upon the men and gave in detail what had happened

later. Bob alone remained silent, his gaze fixed steadily on Rafe Wilson.

The latter was coming to. His great frame twitched. He muttered something under his breath. Then his eyes jerked open as though they had been pulled by a string. They fell upon Bob, and immediately the vague expression disappeared to be replaced by a look of malignant fury.

"You—you!" he sputtered. "I'll mash your head! I'll splinter your bones! Think you can make a fool of me, do you?"

Mr. Corning stepped before the fellow as he lumbered to his feet.

"That's the last threat you'll ever utter round here, Rafe Wilson," he said, his blazing eyes compelling the wavering gaze of the lumberjack. "You're fired! Hear that? Get out!"

Rankin and Bixby got similar short shrift.

"Come to the office and get the money that's coming to you," went on Mr. Corning. "You can take enough grub along to last you till you get to the next camp. Then get going and see that you keep going."

The three slunk off to pack, sullenly vowing vengeance on the camp in general and the Radio Boys in particular.

"Just the same," remarked Herb, as they discussed the fracas later on, "I've a notion that we

haven't seen the last of those Canadians. Did you see the look Rafe gave Bob as he started off?"

"Can't blame him after Bob's K O," chuckled Herb. "Gee, Bob, that sure was one flying tackle you treated him to. I never saw a neater, even upon the football field."

There was no denying that life at the Corning Camp was much pleasanter after Rafe Wilson and his cronies had left. Though the boys may have had their doubts that they had seen the rascals for the last time, they soon forgot the troublesome Canadians. They had something closer at hand to occupy their minds.

For several days warnings of coming storms had been coming in over the radio. Snow was sweeping down from the north. They were told that in a few days they might expect the heaviest fall of the winter.

The lumberjacks, gathered in the radio shack at night, listened to these warnings half-incredulously.

"Seems like they was tryin' to git us to worryin'!" commented Slim. "If there's goin' to be trouble, what's the use of knowin' 'bout it so far ahead of time? It'll be bad enough when it comes."

"Where ignorance is bliss," murmured Herb, with a sly wink at his companions.

"Probably the storm will break long before it gits to us, anyway," said Sandy philosophically. "Those weather folks don't know no more about what's goin' to happen than the rest of us."

Mr. Corning, however, was a trifle less skeptical. He listened to the warnings of bad weather with increasing anxiety and worked his men hard.

"We're short-handed now," he told them when they grumbled, "and if that weather sharp knows what he's talking about, you boys will have plenty of time to rest while we're snowbound."

Still the majority of the lumberjacks refused to take the radio warnings seriously. The radio itself was still more or less of a freak with them. That it should be able to predict the weather to them with any degree of certainty savored of magic, and these were hard-headed—or, shall it be said, thick-headed—men who did not believe in magic.

Even when the first snow began to fall they were unconvinced.

"Just a flurry," pronounced Slim, squinting up at the leaden sky. "This winter's just about snowed out. Ain't anything left to fall."

"You've got another guess coming," declared Joe Atwood.

The Radio Boys, at least, believed that the weather bureau knew what it was talking about. Every day the warning was repeated. Canada

was blanketed under such a snowfall as it had not known for years, and the Snow King was sweeping southward, leaving behind him a smothering white trail.

The boys even went to the length of suggesting to Slim Jones that some of the foodstuffs from the storehouse should be brought into the camp kitchen. But the suggestion was received as a jest.

"Ain't never seed a time yet when we couldn't break through to the storehouse," grinned Slim. "We'd be lucky if we never had any harder work than that to do."

Then came the snow. The blizzard descended on them swiftly, borne on the wings of a ninety-mile-an-hour gale. The wind battered the buildings of the camp until they swayed on their foundations. The snow fell in solid, swirling sheets, blinding, smothering.

The blizzard struck them in the late afternoon, and far into the night the men were out with their shovels clearing, clearing, like an army of ants trying to hold back Niagara Falls.

They gave up at last and went back to their cabins, rolled into their hard bunks, exhausted, and slept till the gray light of dawn awoke them to fresh struggle.

All the next day the snow fell, ceaselessly, relentlessly, and all day long the army of ants

worked to stem Niagara, battered by the wind, half-frozen, blinded by snow blended with sleet.

They worked only to keep avenues clear between the various buildings of the little settlement. All thought of leaving camp had to be abandoned. While the blizzard raged it would have been no less than suicide to have ventured into the woods.

The shadows of night lay thickly about the camp, and still the snow fell persistently. The passages made by the men were now veritable tunnels. White walls rose on either side of them as they worked, toiling like slaves to keep the camp from being completely submerged. The path to the storehouse must be kept clear at all costs.

The Radio Boys had worked with the rest, side by side with the most rugged of the lumberjacks, winning new respect and admiration for themselves by their pluck and endurance. But when they knocked off for the night they were so completely exhausted that they tumbled into their bunks, fully dressed, and were asleep almost on the instant.

At what seemed to them but a few minutes later, but might have been hours, they were awakened by a harsh shouting and the pounding of many feet along the snow tunnel outside their shack.

They were drugged with sleep, and it was a few minutes before they could force their senses to function normally.

It was Herb who first found his feet. He drew on his boots and heavy outer coat and threw open the door.

The white snow tunnel was filled with a weird red glow that sent a thrill of terror to his heart.

"Something's on fire! Come on, fellows!" he cried, and darted at full speed down the tunnel.

His comrades followed him, still half-drugged with sleep and stumbling as they went.

They reached the end of the tunnel and stood aghast at the sight that met their eyes.

Great smothers of smoke, great billows of flame rose toward the wintry skies!

The storehouse was in flames!

CHAPTER XX

A TERRIBLE DISASTER

THE tunnel leading to the storehouse broke at the point where the boys were standing and turned sharply to the left.

At the end of the short passage stood a group of the lumberjacks. Some of them apparently had tried to force an entrance to the building. But the heat was scorching, intolerable.

"We ain't got nothin' to fight it with," one of the men told Bob, as the latter forced his way through the crowd. "The water's froze."

"And if it wasn't, we couldn't get bucketfuls enough to do any good," said another, clenching his hands in the desperation of impotence. "All we can do is to stand here an' watch our grub burn, an' maybe that means starvation for every one of us."

It was like a nightmare to be forced to wait helplessly and watch the destruction of their provisions. Life itself was being destroyed in that burning building. For with their food gone and

no hope of succor from outside for days, perhaps for weeks, starvation faced the Corning camp.

"It won't be no slow starvin', neither," muttered Stevens, who was the helper of Jensen, the cook. "We ain't got enough in camp to feed the bunch of us for three days. Seems like we'd better be sayin' our prayers, if we know any."

The heat of the blaze forced the watchers further back in the tunnel. The snow began to melt, ran in rivulets about their feet. Still they stood, a wretched group of men and boys marooned in a snowbound wilderness, while they watched what might prove the signing of their own death warrant. Time passed, and after the last flicker of flame had sputtered and gone out, they returned, a depressed group, to their cabins.

Nor did their spirits revive when, the next day, the débris having cooled sufficiently to permit of entrance to the storehouse, they realized the extent of the catastrophe.

The building was completely gutted. The dry foodstuffs had shriveled into ashes, the canned goods were ruined. Tins, twisted and blackened, strewed the floor, while their contents, mere cinders, mingled with the smoldering embers.

They salvaged what trifles they could and again straggled back to their shacks, a discouraged, cold, cheerless lot.

The cause of the fire was discussed, but no one

seemed able to offer a plausible explanation. In the excitement of the strenuous combat with the blizzard a light might have been left burning. A window broken in by the weight of the snow, a sudden draft, the lantern swept from its nail, perhaps.

In lieu of a better one this explanation was generally accepted. The effect was so appalling that no one cared much about the cause.

"When the fire was discovered it was too late to do anything," Mr. Corning said wearily. "It's a tough situation, boys. We'll have to make the best of it we can."

"Do you think," hazarded Jimmy, when the Radio Boys were in their shack, talking over the calamity, "that Rafe Wilson and his cronies had anything to do with it?"

"I wouldn't put it past them," observed Joe.

But Bob shook his head.

"If it weren't for this storm, I'd think there might be something in it," he said. "As it is, I don't think they were mixed up in it. They had just about grub enough to get them to the next logging camp, and you can bet that they legged it while the legging was good. Besides, even if they had hung around with that in mind, they wouldn't have dared do it because they couldn't get away through these drifts. No, I guess we'll have to leave them out of it."

When dawn had glimmered that morning, dim and overcast in a leaden sky, the men had found that the snow had stopped temporarily, but the enveloping haze promised more to come.

When the call for breakfast had come, one of the men had said grimly:

"We might as well enjoy it. Probably the last square meal we'll get."

In the days that followed the dismal prophecy was fulfilled. All were rationed and the stores husbanded with the greatest care. Still they disappeared with alarming rapidity. There were so many mouths to feed and so pitifully little with which to feed them.

Two days passed, three. The snow had recommenced and descended heavily upon the desperate camp, cutting it off more completely than ever from outside aid.

Repeated attempts were made to battle the storm and break through to some settlement. All the attempts met with failure. The men were beaten before they had gone a hundred yards.

"Out there," they gasped, dragged back by comrades to the comparative warmth and safety of the camp, "it's death. Impossible to break through."

It was the afternoon of the fourth day. Every one in the Corning camp was hungry, desperately hungry. The Radio Boys, depressed by the raven-

ous look on the faces of their half-starved comrades, had shut themselves up in their own shack to be with their gloomy thoughts.

"It's getting awful," Herb groaned. "Hardly a crust to-day, and there'll be less to-morrow."

"To think that we once lived on the fat of the land!" moaned Jimmy.

Herb looked at the speaker, and the shadow of a smile flickered across his strained face.

"Well, you can live on the fat of Jimmy for some time to come," he remarked.

No one laughed at the sorry joke.

"We're in a tight fix," observed Bob soberly. "The look on the men's faces makes me sick. They've been pretty patient so far, but a day or two from now——"

He broke off, got to his feet and went over to the receiving set. When he faced about his face was shining with a queer light.

"Say, fellows," he said softly, "what a bunch of dumb-bells we are. We've clean forgotten that we have a sending set."

CHAPTER XXI

GLIMMERING HOPE

For a moment his comrades stared at Bob Layton in silence. Then they leaped to their feet with hoarse shouts of renewed hope.

"The sending set!" yelled Herb. "What dummies we were not to think of it before!"

"Oh, gee, fellows!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Think of sitting down to an honest-to-goodness dinner again! Steak smothered in onions, cauliflower, rice pudding, mince pie——"

Joe regarded his companions thoughtfully.

"Where's the juice coming from?" he wanted to know.

"I've been wondering about that myself," replied Bob. "There's the gasoline engine down at the small sawmill——"

"Just the thing!" cried Herb before Bob could finish. "We can use those batteries for power."

"Let's try it now!" exclaimed Jimmy, before whose tormented eyes still floated visions of a steak smothered in onions.

"Why not?" responded Joe, tightening his belt suggestively. "I'll say we haven't much time to lose. We can take the set along with us and set it up in the sawmill," he added.

The suggestion had filled them with a hope that they scarcely dared encourage. Suppose this last desperate hope should fail!

They would send out message after message from the snowbound camp, telling of their plight and asking for aid. One of those messages had a chance of being picked up by some one, somewhere.

The thought intruded that, even if this should happen, it would be hard for any rescue party to force a way through those terrible drifts that had defied every effort of the men of the Corning camp to break through. What the lumberjacks, driven by desperation and hunger, could not do, others might also fail in doing.

"Better not say anything to the men yet about what we're going to do," Bob cautioned. "They may greatly exaggerate our slim chances of rescue."

"No use raising their hopes perhaps for nothing," agreed Joe. "The poor fellows have enough on their minds."

"And little enough on their stomachs," put in Jimmy dolefully. Somehow, the stomach was seldom far from Jimmy's thought.

"We'd better take Mr. Corning into our confidence, though," Herb suggested.

"Sure thing," Bob agreed readily. "He can give us the information that will enable a searching party to locate us more easily."

They sought out the owner of the camp, and his care-lined face lighted up at hearing of their plan.

"An inspiration!" he declared. "Go to it, boys. Once get in touch with the outside world and it'll find some way to send us help."

With jubilant hearts the Radio Boys hurried back to their shack. Their faces were radiant. They had only a chance, a slim chance at best, but still it was a chance, and it was glorious to have something to do, something to distract their thoughts after the gloom and hopelessness of those terrible days.

"Here's hoping that we find the set in good condition," observed Jimmy.

They rushed into the shack and Joe ran to the closet in which the sending set had been stored.

It had reposed in a big box like a carpenter's chest that Mr. Plummer himself had made for the boys when they were contemplating the trip. It was large enough to contain both the sending and receiving sets, and was carefully lined with cloth so that the sets should not knock against each other.

Joe threw open the closet door.

"Come to papa!" he called jocosely, as he bent down to take hold of the box. But he straightened up like a flash and stood dumbfounded.

"Bring it out, why don't you?" called Herb impatiently. "Or aren't you strong enough to do it all by your lonesome?"

Joe turned toward his comrades and his face was pale.

"It's gone!" he cried.

"What?" came from all the others in a startled chorus.

They made a concerted rush for the closet. It was empty!

For a moment their hearts seemed to miss a beat as they stared at each other in consternation.

"Gone!" cried Bob.

"It can't be!" exclaimed Herb, as he dropped on hands and knees and desperately explored every corner.

"It can't be, but it is," declared Joe.

"That splendid sending set!" moaned Jimmy. "And just at the time we needed it most!"

"Do you suppose some of the lumberjacks may be putting up a joke on us?" asked Bob, clutching wildly at any shred of hope.

"I don't think so," replied Joe. "But we'll make sure."

They rushed about through the little settlement

making inquiries of all the men. But all disclaimed any knowledge of the missing sending set and their surprise and sympathy were so unfeigned that the Radio Boys were forced to discard the theory of a joke.

Mr. Corning was very grave when they told him of the disaster that had befallen them.

"Too bad! Too bad!" he exclaimed. "I was beginning to build high hopes on the sending set from what you told me. It seemed almost like our last chance."

"Who on earth could have taken it?" asked Bob. "It didn't go away of itself."

"I could hazard a guess," replied Mr. Corning, "though I don't want to do any one an injustice. But if you ask me, I should say offhand that it's the work of Rafe Wilson and his gang."

"I wouldn't put it past them," declared Joe.

"He hates us all like poison," put in Jimmy, "especially Bob, after the licking Bob gave him."

"That's the answer," muttered Herb disconsolately.

"But Rafe didn't have it when he left camp," declared Bob. "He and his mates were empty-handed except for their kits of clothes and tools."

"That is true," replied Mr. Corning. "But they may have only pretended to go at that time. It would have been an easy matter to hang around and get the box out of your shack at night when

you boys happened to be away from it for a time. There are no locks on the doors. We don't look for thieves in the camp," he added bitterly.

The Radio Boys retraced their way sadly to their cabin. They were sore and thoroughly disheartened.

"And to think of all the time and money I put into that set!" groaned Bob. "Why, it would have cost me five hundred dollars if I had bought it of a dealer."

"Perhaps that's the reason those rascals stole it," conjectured Jimmy. "They saw a chance for easy money."

"No, I don't think it was that," interpolated Joe. "Those louts are too ignorant to know the value of a set like that. Much more likely it was for revenge. No doubt they're gloating now as they think of us grouching about it."

"I tell you what I think," put in Herb. "Rafe has probably heard us talking about the value of the sending set in tracking down criminals. It's possible that he had a hand in the burning of the storehouse. He may have figured that we'd send out a call for the arrest of him and his cronies and that we couldn't do it unless we had the sending set, now that the telephone and telegraph lines are down."

"There may be something in that," assented Bob thoughtfully. "But here's another thing to

think about. That set is heavy, it's hard going in the snow, and it's a mighty long way to the next camp."

Bob's face lighted up as a thought struck him.

"Look here, fellows!" he cried, jumping to his feet. "All this time we've been going on the idea that those fellows have taken the set with them to the place they were hiking for. Perhaps they haven't done anything of the kind! It may be that they've taken it only a little way, just far enough to make us despair of finding it, and then have dropped it somewhere or hidden it."

"By Jove, I shouldn't wonder if you were right, Bob!" cried Joe. "What boobs we are not to have thought of that before!"

"If they dropped it, it was probably over a cliff or something of that kind and it smashed to bits," was the gloomy view that Jimmy took of the situation. "Still, there's no harm in trying to find the bits."

"The snow has wiped out their footprints long ago," remarked Herb dubiously.

"Of course," assented Bob. "But we know the camp they were striking out for and the general direction they'd have to take. Let's get busy and go as far as we can. It's better to do that, even if we fail, than to sit here doing nothing."

The others agreed with this and all went at once with their plan to Mr. Corning.

He listened attentively as the Radio Boys explained what they had in mind.

"I shouldn't wonder if you're right," he observed. "But I'm very reluctant to have you go out with the snow so deep and the storm still raging."

"But anything's better than starving to death!" argued Bob, who liked his plan better the more he thought of it. "It looks as though that's what we're coming to unless we get that sending set."

"That's very true," agreed Mr. Corning, the lines of care in his face deepening. "Well, I'll let you go, providing you promise not to go far. If those fellows have dropped or hidden the set anywhere, they'd think that a mile from here was as good as a hundred. You must take your guns with you and plenty of ammunition. I want you to promise to be gone not more than two hours and that every ten minutes you will fire a shot. We'll fire an answering shot in return, and in that way we'll be able to keep in touch with each other. If you should get mixed up in your directions, that will be a way to guide you to the camp."

The boys promised faithfully that they would obey these injunctions, and after wrapping themselves in their heaviest clothing and seeing that

their guns were in good order they started out. Mr. Corning had pointed out several landmarks in the way of trees and cliffs that indicated the route that Rafe and his cronies had probably taken.

The boys were not long in finding out the stiffness of the task to which they had set themselves. The wind cut like a knife. The snow half blinded them and drove stinging particles into their eyes which were about the only part of them that was exposed.

If they had been in their usual physical condition, they could have endured the struggle more easily. But their vitality had been reduced by the short rations that had been doled out to them, and this additional tax tried them to the utmost.

But if their bodies were comparatively weak, their hearts were strong, and they ploughed their way through the drifts, inspired by the hope of finding what they sought. They spoke but little, for breath was precious.

Their eyes searched out every possible hiding place, every clump of trees, every thicket whose top protruded over the snow. Every gully and every ravine was explored with equal care.

If their progress was slow, they had at least the satisfaction of knowing that they overlooked nothing and were clearing up thoroughly as they went along.

At intervals, as they had promised, they discharged a shot and a moment later heard the answering report from the camp. This was comforting in a sense, but at the same time a little discouraging, for the clearness of the answering shot told them how close they still were to the settlement and how little progress they had made.

"Looks like a forlorn hope," panted Jimmy, as the Radio Boys gathered on the leeward side of a patch of woodland to rest and get their breath.

"It does, sure enough," assented Joe. "But you know forlorn hopes once in a while win out."

"Are we downhearted?" asked Bob. "We are not! We've got three-quarters of an hour yet before we have to return to camp and a lot may happen in that time. Shoulder arms. Forward! March!"

"I wouldn't know I had any gun to shoulder, if it wasn't for my eyes," observed Jimmy mournfully. "All the feeling has gone out of my fingers."

"Let me carry your gun for a while until you can swing your arms about and restore the circulation," suggested Bob.

"Not on your life," returned Jimmy stoutly. "I'll keep on till I drop. Let's go."

The lads went trudging on again, bending their heads to the wind, which, instead of lessening, seemed to be increasing in force and fury.

They had not gone far on this second lap before an exclamation from Bob, who was in advance, called the others to attention.

"Look there, fellows!" he cried, pointing to what seemed an opening in the side of a small hill. "Looks like a cave. Maybe they've hidden the set in there."

The four boys hurried toward the spot. In the summer time the thick shrubbery that grew in front of the opening would have hidden it from view. Now the stems were leafless and the black opening showed plainly against the surrounding snow.

"Whether we find anything in there or not, we can be sheltered a few minutes from the wind," announced Herb, as he made for the entrance.

"Hold your horses!" commanded Bob, seizing Herb by the arm. At the same time he sniffed the air. "There may be something in there we don't want to find. Doesn't smell just right to me."

He had hardly spoken before there came from the depths of the cave a bloodcurdling growl!

CHAPTER XXII

A LUCKY DISCOVERY

At the sound of the growling within the cave, the Radio Boys looked at each other in consternation. Then, by a common impulse, they bolted to a safe distance from the cave entrance.

"What do you suppose it was?" panted Jimmy, when they had paused for breath. "A bear?"

"Nothing else but!" responded Bob. "And a whopping big one, too, judging from the growl. Our shots or our talk or both must have disturbed him."

"Or them," added Joe. "Where there's one there may be others—one other, anyway."

"Well, I haven't lost any bear," put in Herb, "and I vote that we make tracks before the bear or bears come to the mouth of the cave to see what it's all about."

"I'd like to take a shot at him or them," said Joe longingly. "Just think how good some bear steaks would taste right now!"

"And how good some boy steaks would taste to the bears," suggested Jimmy.

"I guess we'd better let well enough alone," put in Bob. "I'm aching to take a chance, and we would, if it weren't for this deep snow. The bear could plough through it faster than we can, and if we didn't get him in a vital spot it would be all up with us. He'll be savage, too, at being disturbed in his winter sleep."

"And hungry, too, after his long fast," added Herb suggestively. "I haven't any ambition to lie down in a bear's insides. Let's move on."

"I'll tell you what we'll do, though," said Bob, as prudence conquered and they started on their road to camp. "We'll mark the spot in our memory as well as we can and bring out some of the men, so that we can have guns enough to settle the bear or bears to a certainty. It would help us a lot in our supplies."

This they did on their return and came back with reinforcements. But to their bitter disappointment, the inmate or inmates of the cave had taken alarm and disappeared.

"Well, this first day's search has been a flivver," mourned Jimmy that night, as the boys, with ravenous stomachs that the crumbs doled out to them had done little but aggravate, sat disconsolately in their shack.

"We'll try again to-morrow," replied Bob,

whose indomitable spirit was only spurred on by difficulties. "The more I think of it the stronger my hunch grows that that sending set is not so far away."

"Not much nourishment in a hunch," remarked Herb gloomily.

"Quit your grouching," commanded Bob. "We're far from being licked yet."

The next day was the worst one the storm-imprisoned party had yet encountered. The wind had become a gale. To fight it was like butting against a wall. It was all the Radio Boys could do to keep their feet.

This time Mr. Corning limited them to half a mile from the camp when the lads set out on their search for the sending set.

"Men have been frozen to death in less bitter weather than this," he said. "Don't you think perhaps you'd better give it up? You haven't one chance in a hundred of finding the set."

"Then we'll take that one chance," returned Bob. "I'd as lief freeze to death as starve. But we shan't freeze. It isn't as if one of us went alone. If one should get tuckered out, he has the others to help him back to camp."

In this Bob's mates backed him up stoutly.

"Plucky young rascals," said Mr. Corning. "Just this once, then, on condition that you'll be back within an hour."

They hurried off before the lumberman could retract. This time they chose a route somewhat to the right of what they had traversed the day before, but still in the same general direction of the course they thought Rafe Wilson and his cronies had followed.

Their line of march brought them before long to the old sawmill that had been in use when the camp was new, but that was seldom used now that the enterprise had grown to its present proportions.

They stood in the lee of it for a few moments to get some respite from the biting wind.

"Couldn't be that Rafe had dropped the set in here, do you think?" asked Jimmy. "Nobody ever comes here."

"No such luck," said Joe, looking through the window. "I can see everything in there, and there's no trace of the set."

Suddenly Bob's gun went off and his mates jumped.

"What the mischief—" Jimmy was beginning.

"I got him!" exclaimed Bob exultantly, as he floundered through the drifts to where a small gray object lay silent on the snow.

"A rabbit!" he cried, holding it up for inspection. "Couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it hopping about. Had to shoot quickly, but I potted it."

"Good work, Bob!" exclaimed Joe, slapping his comrade's back. "We'll get at least a bone apiece out of this when Jensen makes a stew."

"Let me carry it," put in Jimmy hungrily. "Gee, it would feel good to press some food against my stomach even if I haven't it inside!"

Bob laughingly surrendered his quarry, and then all the boys looked about eagerly for other game of the same kind. But the luckless rabbit had no fellows, or if it had, they kept closely to their snug warrens.

"Well, let's be thankful for small mercies," remarked Bob. "But let's hustle now. Our hour is going fast and I don't think Mr. Corning will let us come out again. It's now or never."

They pressed on against the driving gale with desperation in their hearts. They spread out as widely as they dared, to cover as much territory as possible. But the coveted object they sought still eluded their straining eyes.

They had not gone far from the sawmill before they came to a deep gully that barred their further progress in that direction.

Bob looked at his watch and summoned his companions to him where he stood near a great tree whose branches protruded over the gully's edge.

"Guess we're out of luck, fellows," he announced sadly. "We've got to start back if we

want to keep our promise to Mr. Corning. We've done the best we could, but fate has been against us."

"About time we made our wills, I guess," said Herb gloomily. "That is, if we have anything to leave—which I haven't."

"Keep still, fellows!" broke in Joe abruptly. "Don't make a move. Keep your nerve and look up into this tree."

Startled, but impressed by his urgency, the Radio Boys stood motionless in their tracks and then very slowly looked upward.

On one of the great leafless branches was stretched a long gray body. A tail was lashing ominously from side to side and green eyes glared down at them.

The boys looked at the creature as though hypnotized.

"A wildcat!" murmured Bob, scarcely moving his lips. "One of the biggest I've ever seen. Starved, too, no doubt, and more savage because of the hard sledding it's had to get grub in this weather."

"What had we better do?" asked Herb, trying hard to keep his teeth from chattering, for it required great will power to stand quietly while the beast might be selecting his victim.

"He's undecided," returned Bob. "He wants to spring, but he hesitates because of our num-

bers. But if we start away, he'll probably take a chance at one of us. Tell me this. Are your guns all loaded?"

The assent was by a glance of the eyes, none of the lads venturing to move his head.

In the meantime the beast had been flattening itself more and more to the bough, not with the desire to hide its presence but to get purchase for its intended spring.

"Get ready," commanded Bob, still in that low tone and without making a movement, "and when I say 'fire' all of you let go at once. It will be queer if one of our shots doesn't fetch him."

The Radio Boys braced themselves for the signal.

"Fire!" commanded Bob.

Like a flash the guns were upraised and four reports rang out as one.

There was a fearful howl and the wildcat fell from the tree, convulsed in the throes of death. At such close range each shot had found its mark.

The boys sprang out of reach, and it was well they did so, for the wildcat snarled furiously and tore about wildly, narrowly missing a vicious dig into Herb's leg.

Then, after a few more writhings, it straightened out and lay still. The boys waited till the last motion had ceased and then approached the beast rather gingerly.

"A lallapooloozer!" ejaculated Herb, as he viewed the long figure. "Gee, I'd hate to have those claws trying to find my vitals!"

"It wouldn't be my idea of pleasure," agreed Joe, with a shudder that he could not repress.

"Well, now that we've got it, what are we going to do with it?" asked the practical Jimmy.

"I hardly know," replied Bob, examining the carcass dubiously. "Under other circumstances I'd leave it here. But there's meat on the body, and although it makes me gag to think of eating cat—well, beggars can't be choosers."

"We'll have Jensen make a stew of it with the rabbit and call it all rabbit," observed Joe, with a grin. "The boys are so hungry they're not likely to ask questions."

"Well, we'll take it along, anyway," decided Bob. "We're lucky that one of us didn't get clawed up."

They had been so intent on the killing of the wildcat that they had failed to notice that the wind had risen until it was almost a tornado.

"Look out!" yelled Joe. "Jump, fellows! The tree is falling!"

Joe's companions looked with consternation and saw that the tree near which they had been standing was bending almost double.

Even as the boys looked, the tree yielded to the fury of the gale and, with a groan that seemed

almost human, was torn out by the roots and hurled over the side of the gully.

The Radio Boys leaped aside, but despite their quickness the escape was a narrow one. A sweeping branch caught Jimmy in falling and swept him to the edge of the gully.

He hung desperately to the brink of the ravine with his fingers and toes and yelled for help.

In a trice his comrades were at his side, and a moment later they rescued him from his perilous position.

"A close squeak, old boy," ejaculated Bob, as by their united efforts his companions pulled Jimmy to safety. "A little more and it would have carried you over the edge. Are you hurt?"

"Scratched and bruised a little," panted Jimmy, as he staggered to his feet. "I guess that lets me out. But what's that?"

His eyes were fairly popping out of their sockets as he pointed to the great hole left by the fall of the tree!

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MISSING SET

"THE box!" screamed Jimmy Plummer, in the unexpected delight of recognition. "The box that holds the sending set!"

Hardly daring to believe their ears, Jimmy's comrades made a rush to the spot on which his eyes were glued.

The uprooting of the tree by the gale had left a tremendous hole, into which some of the surrounding snow had been swept by the shock. There, half-buried by snow and dirt, the boys could discern part of the familiar chest with one of the handles showing.

It had been buried in the snow close by the roots and the shock of the tree's fall had hurled it into the hole.

The Radio Boys set to work at once with frantic energy. They had no tools but in default of these they tore away the snow and earth with their hands until their fingers were bleeding.

But it would have taken more than that to deter

them, and they kept on madly until the box was so far disinterred that they could pull it to the snowbank on which they stood.

"If only the sending set is inside it!" muttered Joe, as they bent over it.

"I can tell by the weight that it is," panted Bob. "There, what did I tell you?" he crowed jubilantly, as he threw open the cover of the chest.

There, sure enough, was the sending set, not a wire or a bulb disturbed, shining in its mahogany covering just as it had looked the last time the boys had stowed it in the closet.

For a time it almost seemed as though the Radio Boys had gone crazy. They whooped. They danced. They laughed. They thumped each other on the back.

Forgotten for the time was cold, wind, snow, hunger—everything. They patted and caressed the set as though it had been a living thing.

"I'll never laugh at your hunches again, Bob!" exclaimed Herb, when at last they had got back a semblance of sanity.

Bob Layton laughed happily.

"The hunch was all right, sure enough," he admitted. "Still, it wouldn't have done us a bit of good if luck hadn't come to our help."

"That wildcat was something of a mascot," chuckled Jimmy. "If it hadn't kept us here for

the last few minutes, we'd have been away from this spot when the tree fell."

"Yes, and the snow would soon have covered up the box again so that it wouldn't have been found till spring," added Herb. "And by that time," he went on with an unusual expression of gravity on his face, "we might have been past wanting that or anything else."

"What's this?" exclaimed Joe, as he bent over to pick up an object partly covered by the snow. "Why, it's a glove, a lumberjack's glove," he added with quickened interest.

"Whose, I wonder?" queried Jimmy, as all the boys crowded about Joe.

"Why, they all look alike," remarked Bob, as he took the worn, blackened glove from Joe's hand.

Bob turned it over and over.

"Some big fellow's, that's a cinch," he observed. "I could almost get both my hands in it."

He bent over the flap and noted a couple of initials scrawled by an illiterate hand.

"R. W.," he read aloud. "There you have it. Just as we might have expected. Rafe Wilson's glove!"

"It must be!" exclaimed Jimmy. "How on earth did the rascal come to leave it here?"

"Dropped it, I suppose, while he was helping hide the box," put in Joe. "Didn't miss it till

afterward and then looked around and concluded he had lost it in the snow. Probably the other fellows were urging him to come on and he let it go at that."

"It would be pretty good evidence in a court of law," chimed in Herb.

"It sure would," assented Bob. "But now, fellows, let's be moving. Herb and Jimmy, you take care of the wildcat and the rabbit. Joe and I will carry the box."

"Not going back empty-handed, anyway," remarked Jimmy. "Gee, but won't Mr. Corning be tickled when he catches sight of the sending set?"

The Radio Boys met the owner of the camp just as he was starting out with Slim and Sandy to look for them.

"I know we're late," cried Bob, as soon as they came within hailing distance, "but we couldn't help it. And I guess you won't mind when you take a squint at this," as he and Joe lifted the set higher.

"And this!" cried Jimmy, as he and Herb displayed the rabbit and the wildcat.

The eyes of Mr. Corning lighted up with relief and delight.

"So you really found the sending set!" he cried. "It was more than I dared hope. Where did you come across it?"

"Not very far away," replied Bob. "Just beyond the old sawmill. And this glove that was with it tells just how the set happened to get there."

He handed the glove to Mr. Corning who examined it with a frown.

"The skunk!" he exclaimed. "Bully and thief! I'd like to have him here and turn him loose for the men of the camp to deal with. What they'd do to him would be plenty."

Slim and Sandy, who had not known of the plans the Radio Boys had of using the set in calling for help, were more interested for the moment in the rabbit and the wildcat.

They looked at the former hungrily and at the latter with a tinge of respect.

"Whopping big fellow," Sandy remarked. "Look at those teeth and claws. Lucky you boys had your guns, or he'd have torn one or more of you to ribbons."

"What kind of eating do you suppose he'd make?" asked Jimmy.

Sandy looked very dubious, but Slim spoke up promptly.

"The only thing to think of is that it's meat and will help to keep the breath of life in us," he declared. "The Indians eat dogs and are none the worse for it. I don't think you'll find any of the boys very finicky just now."

Nor was Jensen the cook finicky when the boys showed him their spoils.

"Sure I'll cook it," he said of the wildcat. "I'll cut the meat into small pieces and do the same with the rabbit. Then I'll stew them up together and the boys can kid themselves that the part they get is rabbit while the other fellows are getting the cat. They're too hungry to care much, anyway."

Jensen did his best, but there was very little meat on the cat, which was mostly skin and bone. The rabbit was almost in the same condition, and the resultant mess simply provided a scrap apiece for the hungry mouths of that horde of men. As in all their so-called meals for the last few days, it left them almost as hungry as before.

"It's put off starvation for a few hours more, and that's all you can say for it," remarked Jimmy. "Gee, I wish we'd bagged that bear."

As soon as they had finished the mockery of a meal, the Radio Boys consulted with Mr. Corning, so that they might be able to give the exact location of the camp to possible rescuers. Then they prepared to get the set to the old saw mill and set it up.

But first they took to the mill as long a length of wire as the camp afforded, in order to put up their aerial. They wanted as long a one as pos-

sible to increase the sending power of the set.

There was a tall tree just a few feet from the sawmill and this they selected for the wire. It was hard work shinning up the tree, for the trunk was slippery with snow and the terrific gale that was still blowing shook it like an aspen. Joe finally succeeded, however, in stringing the wire up along the trunk. In the meantime the others had bored a hole in the cabin wall and got the gasoline engine going.

On their way back to get the set, when all was ready for the installation, they came across an odd procession.

A glance at the group of exhausted men stumbling back from another fruitless struggle with the drifts told the boys that one more abortive attempt had been added to those that had gone before. The men were haggard, weary, beaten, almost dead.

But this was not what drew the Radio Boys' special attention. Attempts of this sort had been all too numerous in the last few days to do more than fill them with dull despair, a sense of their own impotence to combat the terrific forces arrayed against them.

What roused their interest was the sight of a stranger in the midst of the group, members of which took turns in helping him. The man was stumbling along, head sunk on his breast, arms

slung over the shoulders of two of the lumberjacks.

He was mumbling to himself in broken, incoherent phrases. As he came closer the boys saw that his face was haggard and lined, ravaged perhaps by some mortal disease.

Or, they thought, with a thrill of horror at the realization of what they yet might come to, that perhaps the man was only starved.

"Picked him up in a shack where he was lyin' after havin' tried to break through to the camp," one of the men explained, as the boys stared at the pitiful procession. "Out of his head and starved, looks like. Anyways, there wasn't a morsel of food in the shack."

The Radio Boys followed after, and when the stranger was taken into one of the shacks where there was a spare bunk they entered with the rest.

The men deposited the stranger on a bunk, where he collapsed weakly, mumbling to himself, moaning, crying aloud in delirium.

"Bread! Give me bread!" he cried, raising himself on one elbow and looking about him with wild, wolfish eyes. "Food! I tell you I must have food!"

Then he fell back, covering his face with a ragged coat sleeve, and whimpered like a little child.

While some of the men ministered to him and

Jensen hurriedly prepared some broth, the boys, unable to endure more, went to their cabin, got the set, and returned to the sawmill.

They were very thoughtful and depressed, their minds constantly reverting to the stranger, who was, after all, only a little further advanced on the road of starvation than themselves. Their minds refused to picture conditions in the Corning camp a week hence, should help fail to reach them.

Suddenly Jimmy, who had been very thoughtful for him, blurted out:

"I'll bet anything I own I've seen that man before!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RADIO CALL

JIMMY'S companions looked at him in surprise at his sudden outburst.

"You mean that poor half-starved fellow the boys lugged into camp?" asked Bob.

"Yes," replied Jimmy. "There was something familiar about him. But with that growth of beard on him I can't quite place him."

"Cudgel your brains," counseled Bob.

"His what?" asked Herb, with a bewildered expression.

Jimmy disdained to reply, but though he bent to his work as stoutly as the rest of them, his mind kept ever and again reverting to the problem.

It took a long time to get the sending set in shape, but when they were sure it would stand every test Herb hurried back to camp to get Mr. Corning.

The lumberman was at the mill in a few minutes, a faint hope showing on his worn face. He

eyed the set wonderingly and with just a touch of incredulity.

"Do you mean that you can actually send out a call with so small an aerial, a call that can be picked up?" he asked.

"We can send out the call," Bob answered gravely. "Then all we can do is to hope that some one may pick it up. Of course, our range is not great, and it can be heard only by some one who happens to be in on our wave length. It's largely a matter of chance."

"But even if it is heard, how will you know that it is?" asked Mr. Corning.

"Perhaps the first thing we'll know about that is when we see the help actually coming," replied Bob. "But the way I figure it out is this: If any one catches it, his first thought will be to communicate with some broadcasting station by phone or telegraph. The station in turn will send the news everywhere. Near-by towns and cities, government agencies, perhaps, will get busy at once. That reminds me," turning to his comrades, "two of us will have to stay here to send out the calls, and two more must be at the receiving set in our shack to hear anything that may be broadcast. In each case one can sleep while the others keep watch. Joe and I will attend to the sending, you, Jimmy and Herb, stay at the receiving end. Here goes."

The group looked on with white strained faces as Bob sent call after call winging over those frozen wastes, the one frail contact of the snow-bound camp with the outside world, its one hope of succor.

Again and again that cry of starving men pulsed through the winter night.

"There," said Bob, turning from the instrument, "one of those calls should get through."

"Let us hope it does," said Mr. Corning solemnly.

Jimmy and Herb went back to their shack and brought back to Bob and Joe a stack of bedding and blankets to keep the latter comfortable during the night. Then they themselves returned to their cabin to keep vigil over the receiving set.

For many hours they remained there, one on duty while the other slept, tuning in on all the nearest stations in the hope of getting some reply to the call for help. They knew that at short intervals their comrades in the sawmill were sending out that call. But they waited in vain for a reply.

There was music, glorious music that awoke in them no response. There were jokes and funny stories that aroused in them no laughter. One of the most exasperating features was a talk by an eminent physician warning his hearers against eating too much. Jimmy cut him off quickly.

But there was no statement telling of the desperate situation of the starving people at Lumber Run. All those frantic calls had thus far been wasted.

Even after midnight, when the boys knew that most of the stations had closed for the night, Bob and Joe sent out their signals. There was always a chance that some amateur, tinkering with his set in the early hours of the morning, might hear them. This hope proved as futile as the others.

When morning came the Radio Boys, white and hollow-eyed, had the little doled out to them that was their share of what was called breakfast. And they learned from Jensen that by the next morning there would not be even that much. The larder of the camp was being literally swept bare.

The only one who was not ravenously hungry in that camp was the stranger who had been brought in the day before. His need was the greatest, and even the roughest of the lumberjacks did not grumble at the food reserved for him.

"Let's drop in and see that newcomer," suggested Jimmy, after they had finished their pretense of a breakfast. "I'd like to know how the old fellow is getting along, and I still have a hankering to see if I can place him."

Leaving Herb at the receiving set, which they did not allow to be deserted for a minute, the

other three bent their steps to the shack where the sick man was lying.

They found him still in a delirium. For some minutes he would lie in a sort of coma; then he would break out into more or less incoherent mutterings.

It was not a prepossessing face that lay gaunt and white against the pillows. It was only in part that his condition explained this. There was something essentially mean and furtive about the man, showing in the narrow slits of eyes, the thin, rapacious nose, like a beak, and the hard, selfish mouth.

"Anyway, the gold is there!" he exclaimed. "Plenty of it in the old Daney house. Oh, to wash my hands in it again!" and he rubbed his withered hands together gloatingly.

The boys looked at each other in surprise.

"Sounds as if the old fellow were a miser," remarked Joe.

"Sure does," agreed Bob. "Shouldn't wonder if——"

He stopped, for the man was babbling again.

"And you won't get a cent of it, Sam Plummer!" he cackled. "Not a cent! Ha, ha, ha!" and he went off in a burst of weak laughter.

Jimmy had started to his feet at the mention of his father's name.

"Now I know him!" he cried. "The old repro-

bate! It's Jason Pelton, the fellow that got away with my father's two thousand dollars!"

The boys stared at each other, wide-eyed and wondering.

"Are you sure?" asked Bob.

"Dead sure," replied Jimmy. "The old crook! Crowing over his cunning in cheating my father! 'Plenty of gold in the old Daney house! Sam Plummer won't get a cent of it!' He won't, won't he? Jason Pelton, you have another guess coming!"

CHAPTER XXV

FOOD FROM THE SKY

THE Radio Boys left the hut in a tumult of emotions. The first person they ran into was Mr. Corning.

"Do you know, Mr. Corning, whom you have in there?" asked Jimmy eagerly, indicating the hut they had just left.

"No," replied the lumberman. "I haven't asked him his name and he hasn't told me."

"Well, I can tell you!" replied Jimmy. "It's Jason Pelton!"

Mr. Corning started in surprise.

"Jason Pelton!" he exclaimed. "Why, that's the man who swindled your father. The man your father was hunting for. He told me all about it the last time he was up here."

"Well, he's in that hut," affirmed Jimmy. "I knew I'd seen him somewhere before. And he's given himself away, chuckling about his money and saying that Sam Plummer will never get a

cent of it. It's Pelton, all right. And, Mr. Corning, where is the Daney house?"

"It's an old abandoned house deep in the woods about ten miles from here," replied the lumberman. "It's said to be haunted, and nobody ever goes near it. Why?"

"Oh, just something the old fellow said," replied Jimmy. "I think he's made his hangout there."

"Likely enough," replied Mr. Corning. "It would be a good hiding place. Well, we've got Pelton now, all right, and we'll keep him safe until your father comes. That is, if he comes and finds any of us alive," he added drearily. "By the way, you haven't heard anything from your radio calls yet, I take it?"

"Not yet," replied Bob. "But we're going to keep plugging until we do. We're far from dead ones yet."

But the confidence with which he spoke was not justified by anything that occurred that day.

All through the long hours they flung their calls into the ether. But there was not the slightest inkling that those calls had been heard, and their hopes waned with every hour that passed.

The boys were growing weak and dizzy. Their heads seemed to be floating above their shoulders. An awful fear began tugging at their hearts that this might be the beginning of delirium. If that

came, they would not be able to send out any intelligent calls at all, nothing but gibberish that, even if heard, would evoke wonder—possibly laughter. Laughter!

They had no dinner at all that day. At supper only a crust. Some of the men were beginning to talk strangely.

Doom brooded over the camp.

It was eleven o'clock that night when Herb went whooping down the path to the sawmill and burst through the door.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he yelled.

"Got what?" cried Bob and Joe, springing to their feet.

"An answer! An answer!" shouted Herb, almost beside himself. "They got your call. Just heard from WGY. 'Tell Lumber Run that help is coming,' they said. 'Got your location all right. Airplane will reach you and drop food tomorrow morning at daylight.' "

He grabbed Bob and Joe and tried to dance around the room with them. But they were all too weak and fell in a heap to the floor.

With an affectionate pat on the sending set that had proved their salvation, the boys left the mill and hurried back to the camp, which they found in wild commotion, for Jimmy had whirled through the place like a dancing dervish, shouting the good news.

The men had tumbled out of their shacks and were yelling with joy and slapping each other on the back, cavorting about like inmates of a lunatic asylum.

There was little sleep that night, and long before dawn all were assembled in the clearing, their eyes turned up toward the skies.

It seemed ages, though it was but little more than an hour, before they heard a faint distant humming that rapidly resolved itself into a roar.

"It's coming! It's coming!" went up in chorus.

A speck appeared in the sky that swiftly grew more distinct, and there was the airplane, hovering about them like a great bird.

It moved about in a spiral until it was as low as it dared to come. Then a small object came hurtling down into the snow.

Mr. Corning darted out and picked it up. It was a piece of wood to which a note was attached.

"Stand from under," the note ran. "We're going to drop provisions. More will come later, and you will be well supplied until you're able to dig out."

The men scattered under the shelter of the trees.

Then, like manna from heaven, bags and packages rained down. A side of beef was one of them. Flour, coffee, tea, sugar, canned goods of all kinds in profusion!

When the shower ceased, the aviators waved their hands, while the lumbermen waved theirs in return with a tremendous burst of cheering. Then the plane soared into the skies and was lost to sight.

The men rushed forward and gathered the packages from the drifts and carried them into the kitchen of the cook shack, where they were disposed under the direction of Jensen, who was stuttering in a Swedish that nobody understood. But nobody cared. All were wildly, deliriously happy.

Then the smell of coffee! And sizzling bacon! And the biscuits that Jensen hastily threw together! The men stood about like hungry wolves, and when the hurried meal was ready would have gorged themselves, if Mr. Corning, as happy as the rest but more self-controlled, had not kept a watchful oversight and limited them firmly until their stomachs should be in a normal condition.

The ovation that the Radio Boys received after the meal was finished was something they remembered all their lives.

"Hurrah for the Radio Boys!" shouted Sandy MacGregor, and the lumbermen fairly raised the roof. And, it seemed, they could not stop. They pounded and mauled the happy, laughing boys, and it was long before the pandemonium at last settled down.

Mr. Corning was quite as fervent, though less vociferous.

"You boys have been the mascots of this camp," he said with deep feeling, as he wrung their hands. "It was a lucky day for all of us when you came here. I shall never forget you."

Twice at intervals in the next week the plane came again until the camp was amply fortified against all possible contingencies and Mr. Corning notified the aviators to that effect in a note, full of fervid thanks, that he threw into a net let down from the plane.

And now the weather changed and a thawing spell set in. The snow melted rapidly, and this, combined with the renewed attacks of the lumberjacks' shovels, finally got the camp into communication with the outside world. The crisis was passed!

Jason Pelton, under the influence of good nursing and abundant food was rapidly recovering and was already throwing out hints that he would "soon be a movin' on."

"He will, will he?" remarked Jimmy grimly, when he heard of this remark. "He'll do no moving on until he's come across. Come on, fellows. I'm going to have it out with the old rascal now."

They found the man sitting in a chair and por-

ing over a checkbook, which he put hastily away on seeing the boys.

"Good morning, Mr. Pelton," said Jimmy.

The old fellow started.

"Who said my name was Pelton?" he demanded.

"Nobody need to say it," replied Jimmy. "I know it. And you know my name, too. My name's Plummer."

The man's start this time was more pronounced.

"Ever hear it before?" asked Jimmy.

"Don't know that I have," mumbled Pelton, averting his eyes.

"Oh, yes, you have," declared Jimmy. "You were speaking the other night about Sam Plummer and saying you wouldn't pay him a cent."

A look of terror came into Pelton's eyes.

"Must—must have been sayin' first name came into my head," he stammered, while perspiration started out on his brow.

"It's no use, Mr. Pelton," said Jimmy firmly. "I know you and I know all about you. The Sam Plummer you spoke of is my father. You swindled him out of two thousand dollars. He's been hunting for you. Now you're here, and you'll stay here until my father comes. I don't know whether he'll put you in jail or not. He can, if he wants to. He's pretty sore. Perhaps you'd rather settle with me before he gets here. I

noticed that you have a checkbook. Draw a check to my father's order for two thousand dollars with interest and keep out of jail."

"I—I won't do it," shrieked Pelton, all his miserly instincts coming to the fore.

"All right, then, it's jail for you when my father gets here," declared Jimmy. "Perhaps, after you get in jail, we can find enough money to pay the debt in the old Daney house."

The shot went home. The old man shook in a very convulsion of terror lest his hidden hoard be discovered.

Jimmy let him stew in his own juice for a minute or two. The miser was shivering as with an ague.

"I—I'll give you a check," he stammered at length, in a voice so low as to be almost inaudible.

Jimmy shot a glance of triumph at his comrades.

"Now you're talking sense," he said. "Herb, will you run down to Mr. Corning's office and get pen and ink? And ask him to come along to see that everything's done right, will you?"

Herb was off at once, and returned shortly with Mr. Corning, to whom Jimmy briefly outlined the situation.

Pelton drew the check for the full amount, with interest. He had balked at the interest, but Mr. Corning, who had taken charge, was inexorable.

"A good day's work, Jimmy," said the lumberman approvingly, as he blotted the check made out to Mr. Plummer. "Now I'll send this right on to the bank to be certified. Oh, yes, I know you by reputation, Pelton," he said, as the miser glared at him, "and I know that you'd stop payment on it the minute after you got away from here. But you're going to stay right on here until the check comes back properly certified. Then you can go, and the quicker the better. Come along, boys."

The Radio Boys followed him jubilantly. Once outside, Bob clapped Jimmy on the shoulder.

"You carried that off beautifully, Jimmy!" he exclaimed. "A young Napoleon of finance!"

Jimmy was radiant.

"Oh, I guess the old bean isn't so bad," he stated complacently. "And maybe dad won't be glad!"

A couple of days later the check came back certified and Pelton, upon whose shack a guard had been kept day and night to prevent his decamping, was allowed to shamble off. And the camp seemed cleaner after he had gone.

The end of their stay came all too quickly both for the boys and the lumbermen. The latter gave the Radio Boys a rousing send-off, with fervent invitations to come again and stay longer, and the

boys quite as heartily promised that they would if they could.

It was a perfect winter day, clear and crisply cold, as they started out with their sled to return as they had come by way of the frozen Shagary.

"Can't complain that we haven't had plenty of excitement, anyway," observed Jimmy.

"And lots of close calls," added Herb.

"Nip and tuck with starvation," put in Joe.

"From which only one thing saved us," declared Bob, as he looked gratefully at the sets reposing on the sled. "Score once more for radio, the greatest thing in the world!"

THE END

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